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RPGA NETWORK

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The Network Skinny

MORE CHANGES FOR RAVENS BLUFF

Greetings, all! Much has changed in the past few months. Two long-time LIVING CITY™ coordinators joined Greg Sherwood on the Board of Directors, the conversion process continues (both for item certificates and metagaming), and the overall coordinator staff has changed considerably. We've provided a handy chart to show the new organization. Feel free to contact the staff at the provided email addresses, and they'll do their best to help you out with your LIVING CITY queries.

LIVING CITY — RAVENS BLUFF

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THIRD EDITION CONVERSION CERTIFICATES

Thanks to the fits and starts of the conversion process, there's an understandable amount of confusion regarding what color certificates players should have. Here's the real scoop. All players should be certain to have ORANGE conversion certificates. Red conversion certificates were deemed invalid on July 1st, 2001. To make a long story short, there were some significant problems with the red certificates, so HQ decided to send out a second set of certificates (the orange ones) to be certain all members got the certificates they deserved.

How does this affect you? If you don't have a set of orange conversion certificates, or if the ones you did receive contain errors, here's what you can do:

- Go to http://www.rpga.net/lc.
- Download the discrepancy form (the link is located on the right side of the page). The form is available in .pdf and .rtf formats.
- Mark "Orange Cert Discrepancy" across the top of the form.
- Follow the directions given on the form, being careful to include ALL relevant information (RPGA #, phone number, email address, mailing address, etc.).
- Clearly state whether you need some certificates fixed, or if you are simply missing all of your orange certificates.
- Check the status of your address in the RPGA database by visiting the Member Account Access portion of the Members section of the RPGA Web site (www.rpga.com). HQ has had dozens of certificate packets returned due to bad addresses.

If you're missing orange certificates entirely, HQ can check tracking numbers to see if an orange certificate package was sent to you and determine what became of it. Finally, if you have sent an Orange Cert Discrepancy form to HQ, **PLEASE DO NOT SEND ADDITIONAL COPIES**. Unfortunately, we're so busy fixing conversion problems that we don't have the time to send a notice that we received your form. Sending in multiple forms will confuse the folks working to get this done, and slow the process down for everyone.

COMMUNICATIONS

With a campaign this large, new developments pop up on a very accelerated schedule. To ensure that interested members get all of the campaign-related information they need in as timely a manner possible, we've decided to launch a special announcement-only email list. Many members have been asking for such a list, since at present LC-related discussion takes place in a half-dozen online venues, and official announcements can be difficult to pick out

of all the noise.

To subscribe, send an email message to lc-news-subscribe@egroups.com or go to this e-group's homepage at http://groups.yahoo.com/group/lc-news and follow the instructions for signing up. The group's Web site also will feature important downloadable files and useful resources for the campaign.

WHERE TO GO FROM HERE?

The LC Staff is working on a few projects that are bound to interest players. The Third Edition knighthoods document is under final review by the Directors and Wizards of the Coast's RPG R&D. This popular aspect of the campaign includes four new prestige classes for members of Ravens Bluff's knighthoods.

Magic item creation has been beta-tested a number of times at various conventions and is close to being finalized for the campaign at large. This option will include both interactive capabilities as well as a mail-in/Web-based application process, so all members have a chance to participate.

The various "builder books" (*Sword & Fist*, *Defenders of the Faith*, etc.) also are under review and, pending the approval of HQ and the Directors, soon will be included as part of our campaign. We're also reviewing the new *FORGOTTEN REALMS® Campaign Setting* supplement. This book is not approved yet, but will be very shortly (if not by the time this announcement sees the light of day). The campaign's official Web-based newspaper, the *Ravens Bluff Trumpeter*, also will be re-started for *Origins* and will be available online by the time you get this magazine.

The LC Staff knows that the recent months of turning this ship mid-stream to the new Third Edition D&D system has been tough on both players and judges. But progress is being made. Any inquires can be sent to the above folks. Thanks for bearing with us!

LIVING ARCANIS

Paradigm Concepts, Inc., in association with the RPGA® Network, is pleased to announce the next LIVING™ campaign, LIVING ARCANIS. With a sneak peek planned for *Origins* and the official debut at the 2001 GEN CON® Game Fair, LIVING ARCANIS will plunge thousands of players deep into Arcanis, the World of Shattered Empires, with four original adventures created specially for these events. Paradigm Concepts, Inc. (publishers of the d20 adventures *The Spear of the Lohgin* and *Blood Reign of Nishanpur*) is committed to fully supporting this endeavor, allowing players to have an unprecedented opportunity to affect the storyline and world setting.

These effects will not only be reflected in the RPGA adventures, available to the more than 10,000 GUILD-LEVEL™ members, but also in the quality d20 products produced by Paradigm Concepts, Inc. Join us at GEN CON and make your mark upon the Shattered Empires. For more information about the campaign, including character creation guidelines and an Internet discussion group, visit www.paradigmconcepts.com.

NEWS FROM THE BRANCHES

ASIA-PACIFIC

Conventions, school visits, and LIVING GREYHAWK™ are the movers here right now.

Easter traditionally sees conventions in both Sydney and Melbourne, and this year was no exception. *Conquest* (in Melbourne) hosted around 400 people—a large attendance for a con in this part of the world. Almost 100 of the role-players (the convention hosted war games and board games, as well) played in at least one RPGA game, which is a higher-than-usual percentage. Perhaps that was partly due to our very own Easter Bunny, Richard Dennis, who was handing mini Easter eggs to all the players he GM'd. *Conquest* is one of only two cons remaining in Australia that make a serious attempt to cover all aspects of gaming rather than focusing on a specific aspect of the overall hobby. The con organisers are thinking of laying claim to being the new national convention, having attracted event coordinators from as far away as Perth and Brisbane. They may have to fight that one out with one or two other cons, but their credentials are looking good. On a family note, my ten-year-old daughter (Sulenna) and I had a successful weekend, picking up third and second places respectively in the *Dawn Patrol* event. Sulenna got an award for a (non-RPGA) *Sailor Moon* game and also the Best Young Player award for the convention.

Sydcon (in Sydney) had a little under 100 people, and that seems to be the trend for most cons here now. Most organisers aim for about 70–100 attendees, as that number keeps the stress levels low and allows for a more social atmosphere than can be found at larger cons. Over half the people at *Sydcon* played in at least one RPGA event, another success for Craig Walker and Andrew Carter, who ran the events.

The Hall of Heroes and Heroines visited a Perth school on March 7th. Here's part of what they had to say afterwards:

Last Wednesday (7/3) we were invited to the West Morley Primary School to carry out an introduction to the D&D Adventure Game for their year 7 (12-year-olds) class. We gave a brief history and run-down of D&D, followed by a short scenario taken from the D&D Adventure Game. The day

was a huge success, with the 18 students cheering and "oooohing and ahhhhing" their way through the quick goblin and unicorn encounter.... The adventure box set rules were picked up easily and the kids really took to their roles of player and DM.

One of our members observed the following exchange between a young player and student DM:

> **Mialee:** *I'll try to listen at the door to see if the goblins are saying anything!*
> **DM:** *Ok. Roll a Listen check.*
> **Mialee:** *I rolled an 18.*
> **DM:** *Ok. Hmmmm... you hear the goblins behind the door. They seem to be talking to each other.*
> **Mialee:** *What are they saying?*
> **DM:** [Thinking quickly.] *Errrrrrr... "Quick, hurry up with that hacksaw! We've got to get this unicorn horn off before anyone finds us!"*

Not sure the teacher was expecting that, but good improvisation on the 12-year-old DM's part!

If enough 12-year-olds get into roleplaying like these kids did, perhaps our hobby isn't doomed by computer games, after all. Well done to the HoHaH members for taking this initiative.

LIVING GREYHAWK has taken on a life of its own here, as no doubt it has elsewhere. Perrenland has its own Web site at http://lythia.com/perrenland as well as one at http://www.oerth.com/perrenland, a mailing list on yahoogroups, regular game days, and people working on all kinds of things behind the scenes. Too many to mention here, but a hearty thanks to all concerned.

Last year's Club Decathlon winners, the Naughty Weasels, have started this year's competition with a win. It looks like the North American clubs are going to have a battle on their hands again this year. It's a little disappointing that the other clubs in Asia-Pacific aren't participating—an APAC 1, 2, 3 finish would be something to brag about!

WES NICHOLSON
ASIA-PACIFIC BRANCH MANAGER
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EUROPE

Hello from Continental Europe! Things have been moving fast—so fast that I almost didn't have time to write a short recap on "What's up with the RPGA in Europe" for this *Polyhedron!*

A lot of activity is being planned and we are more than happy to see local conventions popping up all over the continent. So if you (or one of your friends) are thinking of organising a local convention, please feel free to contact me and together we can figure out how the RPGA can support you.

If you attend a convention, write a short scenario, or have any other good idea to contribute to *Polyhedron*, please send it in and we'll pass it on. Who knows, it may end up being published!

And while some wrinkles still need to be ironed out (e.g. getting mailings out on time), we are on the way to becoming a well-oiled machine which will provide you with all benefits that come with GUILD-LEVEL membership.

Looking ahead, I can only see a bright future. Until we meet again, may the Sun smile upon you.

ANN VAN DAM
EUROPEAN BRANCH MANAGER
rpgaeurope@wizards.be

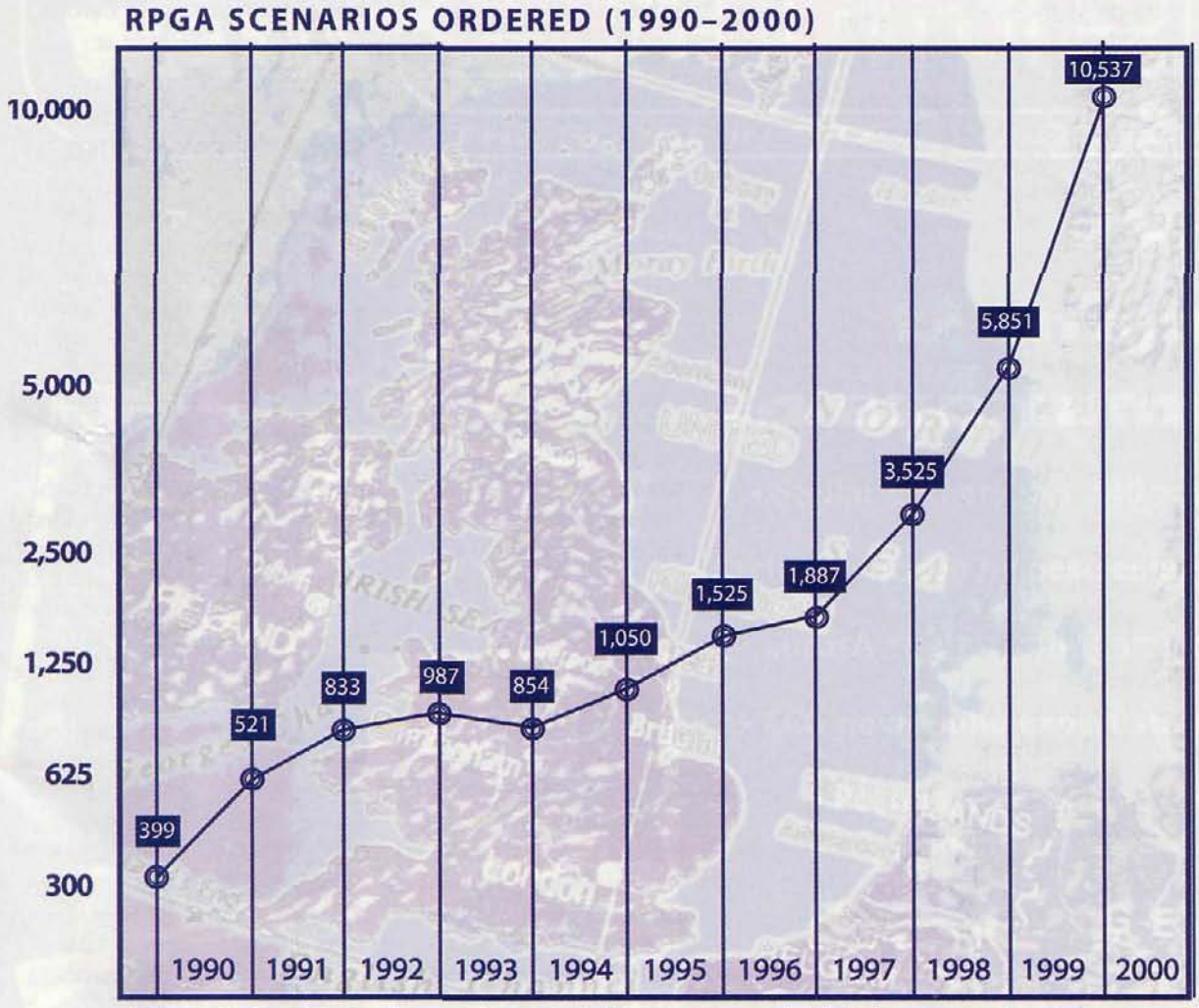
NORTH AMERICA

Greetings, members! I have a variety of topics to touch upon this issue, so let's dive in.

RPGA operations are much more stable here at HQ, now that Tim Kelley has joined the staff and is taking care of the many little things that add up to big problems when they're not addressed. Tim, and the redoubtable Shelley Johnston before him, has freed the rest of us to turn our attention to other matters that needed attention, so we're all beginning to make good progress on our various projects. Tim is a top-notch customer service rep as well, and we receive lots of kudos from members who have had the pleasure of being helped by him. Many of you had a chance to talk with Shelley on the phone or via email before she left the company to pursue some personal life goals, and we hope you found dealing with her as much as pleasure as we enjoyed having her around the office. Thanks, Shelley!

We're going to be using Wizards of the Coast's Periodicals Department to produce, print, and distribute *Polyhedron* and the *Living Greyhawk Journal* magazines from now on (you may have noticed speedier service with this issue—the first of many perks we hope will come from this arrangement). Erik Mona continues to be the editor, of course, but now he won't be a department-of-one anymore. In the past, *Poly* was more of a newsletter than a magazine, so it didn't make sense to use the resources of Periodicals to get it into your hands. Now that *Poly* (as well as the *LGJ*) is a professional-quality magazine, and the RPGA is quite a bit larger, we can get better deals at the printer, and Erik will have all the resources of a staff dedicated to producing magazines full time.

The *Living City* conversion has made noticeable progress toward



We knew RPGA activity had been on the rise, lately, but even we were shocked when we recently ran the numbers. The graph above charts the number of adventures ordered each year for the past ten years.

completion, and the new campaign itself is starting to take shape. Scott Magner has appointed new LC Board members and created some new systems for running D&D as a massively multi-player game. There remain plenty of cert issues to resolve, but we've enlisted our friend Bryn Rector to help chew through discrepancy reports, and by the time you read this, the cert issue should be all but behind us. It's been a long, bumpy road, but we've refused to give up on it, as we realize what the campaign means to so many members. (Here's a hint of things to come, though: When D&D 4th Edition comes out, hopefully a long time down the road, we'll restart the campaign rather than convert!)

We've been working with a small group of members to restructure the Clubs program and tie the Regional Directors into the Clubs organization, creating a local point of contact for all members. This contact will be able to act as an RD as needed, and then can liaise with HQ as needed. Our vision for RPGA Clubs is to give them all the information they need to act as the local hubs of RPGA activity. Like many of our plans, we wish this program were already implemented, but a lot of other HQ operations are tied into it, and we'd rather take it slow and get it right than rush out with a half-baked program.

There have been and continue to be many changes at Wizards of the Coast, for two main reasons. First, there are plenty of things we've been doing for years that need to be updated. This is normal activity for healthy businesses that wish to remain healthy, as those that don't change with the times quickly lose touch. For example, we've needed to update the LC campaign for some time now, and the fact that we waited so long has contributed to the complications encountered along the way. Second, as I've mentioned before, the *Pokémon* boom is winding down, so an insanely huge chunk of business is slowly dropping to a sanely huge chuck of business. WotC remains a thriving

business all the while, but it just won't be as big next year as it was last. When a company's business grows by leaps and bounds, the company itself does the same thing; ergo, when the business shrinks, the company does so, too. At that point, everyone is required to work leaner and examine everything they do, looking for more efficient ways to get the job done. That's where WotC is today.

The RPGA is no exception to this rule, but don't panic! Organized Play is what put WotC on the map, and we know it. Thus, the RPGA is as important to the company as ever. I'm telling you about this because change is inevitable even when there aren't compelling forces driving it, and I want you to not read too much into it. In the end, as long as there's plenty of gaming to go around, then things can't be all that bad.

Let the gaming continue!

David Wise
Worldwide RPGA Director
wiseguy@wizards.com

UNITED KINGDOM, IRELAND, AND SOUTH AFRICA

Once more, dear friends, unto the breach....

At the point of writing we have just come back from a weekend of great games and merriment. Yes, the legs have mended nicely and I'm out of the wheelchair that I was in at *Conception*. I'm able once again to GM, so players beware. A huge thanks to all those who sent kind messages and get-well notes, but most of all to all the members who have been patient with us as we have taken a little longer to turn things around than usual. I must extend huge thanks to Sean Connor, who picked up the pieces and showed enormous self-control as a bored convalescing Ian drove him nuts. Sean must have spent as much time answering my phone calls as he did yours in total. Now, on with the roundup.

EVENTS

Firstly, *Battlemasters*, in Loughborough, England. This had the local members, and some NOT-so-local, out in numbers. More about this in *On the Trail*, but needless to say it was a high success, with the RPGA running 50 and at times 100% more than the previous year.

After *Battlemasters*, we hit the *Student National Championships*, in Leicester, England. This is an event we got involved with for only the second time, last year (in Glasgow) being the first. Again, more detail is in *On the Trail*, but this year saw a huge increase in the demand upon our involvement. Long may this continue!

COGS, in Midlands, England again saw us running Living Greyhawk and Living City—Sarbreenar tables in two slots. Congratulations must go the local RD, Scott Philips, and his ACs for managing to work at all three events in just two weekends. I hope you guys enjoyed the break.

Over the coming weeks, the RPGA will have attended the *Dudley Bug Ball*, in Midlands, England (Scott and his team will be there again, bless them); *MBH Sarbreenar Lives*, in Hinkley, England (organised by Scott again with the help of the LC committee); *Conclave*, in Limerick, Ireland (Scott can't be at MBH and there, surely?); plus *UKGamesFest*, in Harlow, England (what, no Scott?). We have a huge array of games going at this last event, including Classics (in which you're given a character to play) for a variety of systems as well as LC and LG (for which you create your own characters). I'll report back fully in the next issue.

For full information on these and all future events in Europe, check out our Web site at www.rpgauk.com.

SINCE WE'RE TALKING WEB SITE...

Those having the luxury of Web access will now notice an increasing number of advancements and enhancements to the European Web site. There is now a new and easier-to-use bulletin board. The Members-Only area has again been extended, so all you budding writers can check feedback from players on all scenarios from the last few years. Plus, we've added a new Living Force™ area to go along with those for LC and LG. Finally, Service Points have now gone live, and information is available (along with your current tally of points) on the Members-Only area. Check it out and let us know what you think. We intend to keep developing the site, so we are very keen for you to pass back anything you wish to see changed or added.

That's about it, for now. *Gen Con UK* mania is now taking over as we finalise the scenarios, tables and slots for one of Europe's biggest gaming events. For full up-to-date information, check out www.genconuk.com.

May the Goddess Tymora shine upon your dice always.

Ian Richards
UK, Ireland, and South Africa Branch Manager
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Back (Issue) Talk

DANCING WITH DRACONIANS

Greetings from Germany. I've just received *Polyhedron Magazine* #144. It's really great. Especially the *FORGOTTEN REALMS® Survival Kit* and the *Palace of Passion*. I'm looking forward for the new campaign setting. Also, the whole layout is very appealing. Good work!

The new *Living Greyhawk Journal* is perfect for Greyhawk beginners. I've never been to the Flanaess before, but together with the *Living Greyhawk Gazetteer*, the magazine provides a good start into Oerth.

There's only one thing I think should be added. I don't know if there has been an attempt to update the DRAGONLANCE® World for the use with the 3rd Edition DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® core rules. Krynn was always my favorite campaign world. Perhaps someone has already revised the statistics for draconians or the campaign's magical items.

It's great to join the Network for the best hobby ever created.

Stefan Kraushaar
Hanau
Germany

Thanks for the kind words, Stefan! By now, you've probably had a chance to check out the new FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting. *We hope you enjoyed it as much as you enjoyed the preview here in* Polyhedron*!*

While no one has yet chimed in with the definitive Third Edition version of draconians, you'll no doubt want to check out Dungeon #86, *in which DRAGONLANCE co-creator Tracy Hickman penned a Third Edition adventure called the* Anvil of Time. *The adventure includes updated versions of the baaz draconian, kender,* orb of dragonkind, *and* dragonlance.

We've a feeling a lot of readers would like to see an article on all of the various draconian subraces, but we don't have any current plans for it. A canny freelancer might take a chance and query the idea to polyhedron@wizards.com....

IN DEFENSE OF THE FATLING

I am writing this in response to a review of the *Creature Collection* from Sword & Sorcery Studios (*The Polyhedron Review*, *Poly* #145). I recently purchased the book myself and I found it very interesting. While I agree that it might not be the best monster book for a standard game, I think the book's good points far outweigh the bad.

In my opinion, the *Creature Collection* is not supposed to be like either the *Monster Manual* or the *Fiend Folio*, in that it is campaign-specific to the *Scarred Lands* campaign setting, not a book of random monsters to be added to any campaign. While many of the creatures could be used in other campaigns, the true beauty of the book lies in how it ties the creatures to the campaign world, making each one seem strange and interesting.

The harpies aren't just harpies... they are members of a once-human cult called the Sisterhood of the Sickle Moon who were *blessed* by being transformed into a new race. The hollow knights, which the reviewer finds uninspiring, are not just animated suits of empty armor. Rather, they represent a fusion of metal and spirit, hosting souls who fought for the gods and won the right to return to the living only to have their physical bodies destroyed by a jealous evil deity. High fantasy any way you slice it!

The fatling, which the reviewer calls "fantasy's answer to a TV-addicted shut-in," is not just a very fat human—it's a high priest who has been shown favor by his deity, the titan Gaurak the Gorger. A patch of jaundiced, greasy melons grows somewhere near the followers' shrine. These repulsive fruits transform the eater into a reflection of the Ravenous One himself. Much cooler, I think! I can see the look of horror on my wife's face now as she defeats the evil fatling priest only to be attacked by the horde of lard worms that dwell deep in the folds and recesses of the fatling's flesh! Such fun!

THE EDITOR

The Carnival Krew basically amounts to a greater demon that dwells on the Prime Material plane in a freakish swamp of nightmares that will frighten any group of adventurers if handled correctly.

The whole book is like this. The monsters are tied to the setting in a way that makes them come to life and seem real. Besides the host of interesting monsters and ideas that lie within, I think any DM who is interested in building their own campaign and making it unique and different should buy this book for the example of how to do this alone. My only complaint is that the artwork, while well done, is all grayscale... color would have been nice, but I'm sure that would have added considerably to the cost of the book. Just for the record I am not affiliated with Sword & Sorcery Studios in any way, I just picked up the book in a local bookstore and was really impressed. At first glance I thought it might just be another book of weird monsters, but once I got into it a bit I realized it was much better than that.

Mike Wilson
Wichita, Kansas
USA

CERT SENSE?

I have several problems with inaccuracies in *Polyhedron* #146, all of which center on the items described in *The Magic of Raven's Bluff*. Many of these items as described are wrong, do not conform to the versions currently in play, and in a few cases appear to have errors in their creation requirements. I've not even looked at costs to ensure that they match the certs that exist. For instance:

Bracer blade: Re-certed as a pair. Additionally, activating the item is a standard action per the core rules for activating magic items.

Six shooter crossbow: The firing and reloading description is inaccurate and frankly silly. Firing a single bolt is a standard or partial action, firing 3 bolts is a full attack action. Reloading a single bolt is a partial or move-equivalent action, while reloading 3 is a full action. You do NOT get your normal # of attacks, as the magic of the crossbow supercedes this.

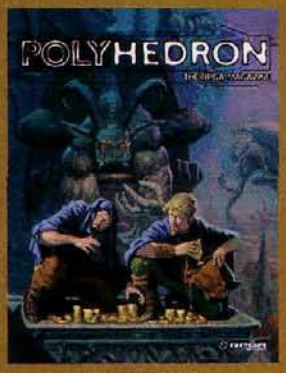
Obsidian war eagle pendant: The +1 competence bonus is granted to the wearer regardless of the weapon used (according to the cert). The wearer requires the Weapon Specialization feat to gain this benefit but gains the bonus with more than just the weapon chosen.

Anyway, those are the ones I can compare to the certs I have and the items I specifically converted. If errata is going to be published perhaps it should be done before the item creation procedure allows these items to be made and create even *more* odd certs than were out there in Second Edition.

Bill Gould
Stoney Creek, Ontario
Canada

Though a lot of things certainly went right *with the recent conversion of the* LIVING CITY *campaign to the Third Edition* DUNGEONS & DRAGONS *game, the rushed schedule inherent to the project created some item conversions that were, to be completely honest, "suboptimal." With more than a dozen members working full time to convert more than 3,000 magic items, a good number of discrepancies managed to work their way into the project, as each worker brought his or her own methodology to the conversion process.*

When the Polyhedron *staff sat down with the entire magic item*



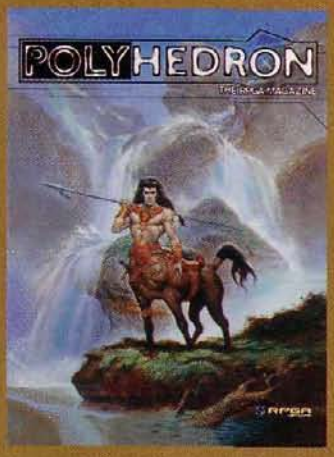
Few things bear out the fact that you folks have eclectic tastes like the reader response survey for *Polyhedron* #145 (January, 2001). While most of you seemed to enjoy the *Monsters from the Members* and *Illicit Wages at Blade's Point* features, reaction to our good friend Elminster is once again all over the board. Likewise, the usual gangs of LIVING™ campaign lovers and haters chimed in about the LIVING CITY™ conversion guide and LIVING FORCE™ character creation guidelines. Here in the office, it warms our hearts that most of you seem to be enjoying *The Polyhedron Review*.

A hearty congratulations goes out to member Thomas Chalker, who wins a copy of *The Standing Stone*, the latest D&D® adventure from Wizards of the Coast! All Thomas did was send in a response survey (just like the one on page 64 of this very magazine). Try it yourself! We promise it'll change you forever.

eBay's Price: $62.02
Your Price:
FIVE BUCKS

Many people resort to online auctions to track down missing *Polyhedron* or *Living Greyhawk Journal* back issues. We're as proud of what we do here as anyone, but $62.50 for a copy of *LGJ #2*? $81.02 for the first five UK *Polyhedrons*? It is possible to pay too much for a good thing.

You can get just about every back issue of our fine publications directly from RPGA HQ as a benefit of membership. Here's a list of what we've got, and how much it costs:



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database, we decided to select items for publication based upon two criteria. First, we selected items we simply found quirky or interesting—the type of things that represented the most creative efforts of the several hundred authors who have written LC scenarios over the last decade. Secondly, we chose items we found "iconic" to the LIVING CITY *"experience" (any article on LC magic items that didn't include* Pax *or the* amulet of life protection, *for instance, wouldn't seem very true to the campaign).*

That left us with just under 50 magic items, most of which had been designed by different people with different command of the new D&D rules. Because Polyhedron *must speak to those players who do not participate in our* LIVING *campaigns, we decided to re-approach many of these items from a home-play perspective. References to "time units" and "module rounds" were stripped from item descriptions, and the values associated with each item were re-cast to more accurately represent the D&D rules (as opposed to the house rules of a giant organized play campaign). In most cases, items in the LC database did not include prerequisites, so these had to be invented.*

But don't worry too much about whether or not our editorial changes will have any effect on your LIVING CITY *character's storehouse of items. As we said in the original article: "Astute players will note that the items below differ slightly from their 'in-play' versions found on official campaign certificates... the following descriptions are geared for home play, and should not be considered official* LIVING CITY *re-interpretations."*

GEN CON® WORRIES

I am very concerned about the scheduling of future GEN CON® Game Fairs as the Con moves out of Milwaukee. After many years of a consistent early August convention, all of the Indianapolis Gen Cons are moving to late August. This is going to lead to a lowering of attendance by many people in the Midwest United States. Many of the very people who live nearest the con will be unable to attend because school will be back in session.

Where I live, in rural Missouri, school begins about August 15th. In recent years, local schools have been moving the start date earlier, as the schools are renovated and air-conditioned. The teachers begin school even earlier. This year, teachers report for duty on Friday, August 10, and students report on Wednesday, August 15. This means that when the Game Fair moves, I will be unable to attend.

Please remember, teachers don't get vacation days to use where they please. Our vacation days are dictated to us by the school board. I realize that not all attendees are teachers. However, many of the attendees are parents. The new, late dates of the Game Fair will prohibit many parents from attending since they will not remove their children from school. In addition, as more and more of our children are becoming interested in gaming, they represent a new generation of convention attendees. When the biggest US Con is held during the school year, the attendance will surely drop.

College students constitute another large group that will be affected by the change. Have you looked around at the attendees lately? Many young people make their first journey to the GEN CON Game Fair as college students. They learn about it through magazines, the Web, and word of mouth and dream of attending. It is as college students that they finally have the money, transportation, and permission of parents to attend. However, since many colleges start classes about the 18th to 20th of August, many college students will be unable to attend. College students simply cannot take the time off classes. They spend way too much money for the privilege to attend, and attendance in class is mandatory.

I hope that the organizers of GEN CON will look at the demographics and re-evaluate the dates of the scheduled Game Fairs. If the new location is unable to work with earlier dates, then the organizers need to look at other locations. Every city would be happy to bid for a convention with attendance like that of GEN CON. Surely an early August date can be worked out that will allow parents, teachers and students to attend. For now, it looks like 2002 will be my last GEN CON for a few years.

Barb Wilkins
Rolla, Missouri
USA

DIGITAL POLY?

Any chance of seeing a CD chockfull of the old *Polyhedrons*? I've love to see it *a la* the recent *Dragon Archive*. A lot of people might be surprised by the variety and excellent material in such a product.

Joe G. Kushner
Posted via the RPGA message board

As cool as it would be, it's extremely unlikely at this time. There certainly wouldn't be enough interest to sell such a product on the mass market. But the real problem is that we don't have second-use publication rights for a lot of the stuff published in the early days of Polyhedron. *For now, the best bet for folks hunting down old issues is to order them directly from us.*

WRITTEN BY THE RPGA STAFF • ILLUSTRATED BY KALMAN ANDRASOFSZKY

PILLARS OF RAVENS BLUFF

In his noted work, *Pondering the Vast*, the sage Elhumide Haerstoon of Highmoon referred to Ravens Bluff as the "Golden City of Heroes." While Haerstoon's characteristic optimism kept him from noting that the Bluff nonetheless contains more than its fair share of villains, his observation does carry some weight. Indeed, the heroes of Ravens Bluff long have been a stabilizing force in the Vast. If not for them, no one would have stopped the armies of the warlord Myrkyssa Jelan, who just two years ago cut a trail of destruction around much of the region. More abstractly, without the heroes of the city, no one would have challenged the claims of a half-dozen insane Red Wizards, a cabal of elementalists, at least three Baneliches, countless dragons, numerous street gangs, hundreds of tanar'ri (including a powerful marilith and, if tales are to be believed, an awakened demon lord), marauding drow, rapacious sahuagin, and so forth. The debt owed by the goodly citizens of the Vast to the adventuring heroes of Ravens Bluff cannot possibly be paid in a hundred lifetimes.

Recently, a handful of Ravenian heroes were captured by the forces of an evil dragon (see the LIVING CITY™ tournaments *Dragon's Rage* and *Dragon's Rescue*). As in most such cases, Ravens Bluff's rulers gathered to plan a recovery. Unlike in other such instances, however, the city fathers and mothers did not delegate the mission to a collection of trustworthy adventurers. Perhaps because they felt guilty about the fate of the original adventurers, but more likely because they honored the debt owed to their captured fellows, the leaders of the city themselves ventured forth to save their agents from captivity.

Among the rescuers was Lord Mayor Charles O'Kane, who thirty-one years ago transformed the city from a chaotic haven of pirates and scum to a largely peaceful, profitable metropolis after defeating all challengers to win his title in the Champions Games. At his side stood the woman who had initiated those games, the much-respected and well-loved Lady Lauren DeVillars, whom many consider the living soul of the City of Ravens. The redoubtable Lord Magistrate Torden Sureblade lent his sword (not to mention his good judgment) to the task, pledging to rescue those who had delivered so many lawbreakers to the courts over the years. He was joined by Relarn Dayspring, Chief Prelate of the Clerical Circle, who represented the wishes of more than a half-dozen of the city's most powerful churches. Lady Penelope Norwood, High Magistrate of the Ministry of Arts, and Bards Fellowship Guildmaster Colin O'Lyre rounded out the assembly, with the mysterious spymaster known as Chaney operating from the shadows.

Through teamwork, zeal, and dedication to saving those who had done so much for the Bluff, these community pillars managed to free the captured adventurers with no casualties, proving once again that their roles in supporting and managing the important affairs of the city didn't fall to them by chance.

REVISITING OLD FAVORITES

It's been seven years since Mayor Charles Oliver O'Kane first appeared in the pages of *Polyhedron*. Since then, the city has suffered a massive war (in which poor Charles, it must be said, didn't fare too well) and has been changed by the events of more than 200 LIVING CITY™ scenarios. Perhaps as importantly, the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® has game evolved into a new edition, and the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign setting, in which Ravens Bluff is set, has been extensively renovated in a recent hardcover book that advanced the campaign's timeline and added several new rules options. Taking the recent events in the *Cycle of Dragons* adventure series as a cue, this article presents four of the most important Ravenian NPCs wholly re-engineered to take advantage of the new system and campaign setting. A future installment will cover the other participants in the brave rescue, and if popular, we'll provide even more information on the campaign's most important NPCs—after all, we've got a bunch of interesting villains to cover, to say nothing of the inhabitants of Sarbreenar, the home of the UK's own LIVING CITY campaign!

Without further ado, let's journey back to Ravens Bluff, where not too long ago visitors arrived in town to find a lawless rabble of self-serving lords who didn't hesitate to use assassination and the dirtiest of dealings to further their fortunes and agendas. A chaotic stopover for unscrupulous slavers, scoundrels, and shifty-eyed cutthroats, Ravens Bluff in those days stood on the brink of collapse. It may have fallen, too, if not for the arrival of one man. . . .

LORD MAYOR CHARLES O'KANE

Few have achieved as much for the city, and suffered so profoundly for it, as has Mayor Charles Oliver O'Kane. Arriving some thirty years ago on a journey to forget his painful past, O'Kane won the mayoralty by defeating all comers in a tournament of physical combat. More than just a warrior, the affable O'Kane has proven time and again his love for Ravens Bluff, and his value to it.

Charles Oliver O'Kane: Male human Ftr18; CR 18; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 18d10+54; hp 173; Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 29 (touch 16, flat-footed 27); Atk +29/+24/+19/+14 melee (2d6+12/15-20, *+5 keen greatsword*) or +23/+18/+13/+8 ranged (1d4+8/19-20, *+3 returning dagger*); AL LN; SV Fort +21, Ref +14, Will +18; Str 20, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 17, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Climb +15, Diplomacy +14, Innuendo +12, Jump +15, Knowledge (local) +12, Ride +23, Swim +15; Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Expertise, Foe Hunter (orcs and half-orcs), Great Cleave, Improved Critical (greatsword), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Luck of Heroes, Mobility, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Quick Draw, Ride-By Attack, Strong Soul, Weapon Focus (greatsword), Weapon Specialization (greatsword).

Possessions: Boots of speed, + 4 chain shirt, cloak of resistance +4, Heward's handy haversack, +5 keen greatsword, potion of cure serious wounds, potion of invisibility, +3 returning dagger, ring of protection +4.

Appearance

Though well into his seventh decade, Mayor O'Kane doesn't look a day over 40. His captivity during the war nearly killed him—through a combination of starvation and torture, O'Kane lost much of his characteristic paunch (and a good deal of the swagger that once accompanied it). He nonetheless retains an imposing figure, belying his enormous strength. His brown hair tops a somewhat ruddy face, and despite his recent hardship and the stresses of governing the city, more often than not his full beard frames a friendly smile. He dresses in fine clothes, preferring somber colors.

Personality

O'Kane remains justifiably proud of his achievements in Ravens Bluff, often referring to his own accomplishments with a bravado some equate with arrogance. He remains ever fixated on improving the lot of his city and citizens, occasionally modifying his sense of morality to achieve goals he feels benefit the majority of his subjects. When faced with a political enemy whom he believes operates from unreasonably stubborn or corrupt motives (as was the case with his rather public—and ultimately more than justified—feud with Amber Lynn Thoden), O'Kane unleashes his legendarily volcanic temper. He understands and appreciates the role adventurers play in the continued welfare of Ravens Bluff, and while he tires of their constant demands upon city institutions and funds, he recognizes these frustrations as a necessary evil.

Position and Duties

As Lord Mayor, O'Kane is responsible for the daily business of running the city, a largely thankless position that sees him chairing meetings of the

Council of Lords, Advisory Council, and Merchants Council, overseeing the city's defense, formulating and promoting foreign policy, as well as countless minor bureaucratic annoyances. Upon first achieving the mayoralty in 1341 DR, O'Kane installed a bureaucracy of assistants to take care of some of the more tedious tasks, allowing him to focus on the "big picture" duties of managing the city's affairs. Though he has no say in who sits on the councils' seats, the mayor is responsible for choosing all of the city's highest civic officers. Many of those he installed prior to the recent war were killed or disappeared prior to the Thoden administration, and he has spent much of the last year purging the government of his predecessor's influence. He keeps himself informed of the happenings of all quarters of the city by relying upon a network of spies and agents originally managed by the now-missing former deputy mayor, Howard Holiday.

History

Few in Ravens Bluff know of Charles O'Kane's life prior to his installation as Lord Mayor of Ravens Bluff. He speaks but little about his past, revealing only that his travels have taken him up and down both coasts of the Dragon Reach. He holds a strong affinity for Dalesfolk, and makes pains to attend the public trial of Zhentarim agents discovered in the city, occasionally even exerting inappropriate influence upon local judges to see that "everything is done accurately and to the fullest extent of the law." He has good reason to hate the Zhents.

Born 76 years ago to farmers in Teshendale, he was but 20 when that dale fell to the Zhentilar in the Year of the Gulagoar. Orc mercenaries killed his entire family save a cousin, Killian, and together the two fought with Dale rebels for much of the next decade before falling in with an adventuring band known as the Company of the Scalding Swords. Chasing rumors that the city of Mulmaster was gearing up for a military challenge to the hated Zhentil Keep, O'Kane parted ways with his cousin and ventured to the City of Danger. The Mulmasteran attack failed to materialize, and he ventured south upon hearing rumors of an interesting contest in the burgeoning city of Ravens Bluff.

The Champions Games, orchestrated by Lady Lauren DeVillars, were intended to select a champion who would, as the city's first lord mayor, knit the fractious nobility and merchants together into a lawful whole. Cynical wags suggested that DeVillars hoped the violent contest would rid the city of some of its most despicable bandit lords and unscrupulous nobles by allowing them to murder each other in the name of politics and entertainment. Rumors persist that prior to the competition, Charles O'Kane unloaded a good deal of his adventurer's wealth upon local guilds and artisans, for several of the other contestants encountered a great deal of difficulty in caring for their horses and equipment after the long journey to the city. By the time of the competition, grindstones and horseshoes were unavailable at any price; blacksmiths and armorers were absent or overwhelmed by prior obligations. Regardless of the truth, O'Kane swept the field and was proclaimed Lord Mayor and Champion of Ravens Bluff.

After personally leading a military action that cleared the nearby mountains of any significant threat from savage humanoids, O'Kane (with suggestions from Lady DeVillars) filled the nascent government with trustworthy bureaucrats before setting out to promote trade and economic development. The newly pacified Ravens Bluff brought with it merchants and lenders from all corners of the Vast, which brought brisk trade and, eventually, a great deal of corruption in the city government. About this time, across the Dragon Reach, Lashan of Scardale turned out scores of "disloyal" (read: scrupulous) advisors and ministers in a consolidation of his government before attempting to unite the Dales by force. O'Kane's remaining allies in the region encouraged these politicians to venture to Ravens Bluff, where they strengthened the mayor's administration.

Late in 1369 DR, O'Kane's great friend, Deputy Mayor Howard Holiday, left the city to investigate strange happenings in the east, a trip from which he never returned. Rumors abound that he shadowed the earliest movements of Myrkyssa Jelan and was discovered and killed, but the truth, and his whereabouts, remain clouded to this day. Early the next year, O'Kane himself was kidnapped by a pack of demons while touring the city with his new deputy, the elf Belanor Fenmarel, who later was indicted on charges of conspiring with the city's enemies in the mayor's abduction.

O'Kane spent most of the war months in captivity. A savagely beaten O'Kane finally was rescued from a vault on the property of the renegade Red Wizard Raven just prior to the close of the war. His right arm had been torn off at the shoulder, and he remained alive only by the most tenuous hold. By the time he had convalesced (with a fully healed arm) at the temple of Lliira, he had lost much influence with the nobility and merchants, some of whom blamed him for the city's poor showing in the war. Without their support, O'Kane lost the mayoralty to the popular Lady Amber Lynn Thoden, who had charmed the cognoscenti of the city with shows of philanthropy in Crow's End and by hiring the drow mercenary Hathmar Blademark, who ultimately proved decisive in the defeat of Jelan's army.

Adventurers recently revealed that the Amber Thoden in fact was Myrkyssa Jelan, a fact that forced even those who had thrown in with her to admit that she was a poor choice to lead the city. In the aftermath of that event, Charles O'Kane returned to the position of mayor, vowing to continue the work he started more than three decades ago.

GUILDMASTER COLIN O'LYRE

A product of the city's deepest slum, the talented Colin O'Lyre spun a difficult life into a series of entertaining tales filled with optimism and hope. Master of the city's Fellowship of Bards, O'Lyre manages the performers of the city with shrewd business acumen and a flair for the dramatic.

Colin O'Lyre: Male human Brd17; CR 17; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 17d6+17; hp 76; Init +8; Spd 30 ft.; AC 21 (touch 15, flat-footed 17); Atk +21/+16/+11 melee (1d6+6/18-20, *+5 rapier*) or +19/+14/+9 ranged (1d4+4/19-20, *+3 dagger*); SQ Bardic music (17 times/day), bardic knowledge +19; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +14, Will +12; Str 12, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 21.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +25, Decipher Script +15, Disguise +20, Knowledge (history) +22, Knowledge (local) +19, Perform +27, Pick Pocket +10, Sense Motive +17; Alertness, Combat Casting, Improved Initiative, Silent Spell, Skill Focus (Perform), Spell Penetration, Weapon Finesse.

Special Qualities: **Bardic Music:** Countersong, fascinate, inspire competence, inspire courage, suggestion.

Spells Known (4/6/5/5/4/4/1; base DC = 17+ spell level): 0—*dancing lights, daze, detect magic, ghost sound, light, read magic*; 1st—*charm person, cure light wounds, expeditious retreat, hypnotism, unseen servant*; 2nd—*detect thoughts, enthrall, hold person, invisibility, tongues*; 3rd—*blink, clairaudience/clairvoyance, haste, major image*; 4th—*break enchantment, dimension door, improved invisibility, legend lore*; 5th—*greater dispelling, healing circle, mirage arcana, persistent image*; 6th—*geas/quest, permanent image, veil.*

Possessions: +4 leather armor, +5 rapier, ring of protection +1, +3 dagger.

Appearance

Apprentice bards secretly call Guildmaster Colin O'Lyre "the Hawk," a reference to his hawkish nose and bright, piercing eyes. An affable and well-loved leader, the guildmaster delights in organizing and performing at the city's brightest galas, if only to display the latest addition to his voluminous wardrobe. O'Lyre favors reds and yellows, preferring striped hose and garish pantaloons. He carries his namesake instrument nearly everywhere he goes, always ready for an impromptu performance. Invariably dressed in a wide-brimmed, stylish hat topped with a colorful feather, the Hawk has done little to conceal the flecks of gray in his shoulder-length auburn hair and neatly trimmed moustache.

Personality

Colin knows the value of friendship, and tries to maintain amicable ties with everyone he meets. Always conscious of the fact that any group of people makes an audience no matter the occasion, his dramatic style ensures that few who meet him ever forget the experience. His almost militant sense of caution is perhaps his greatest fault—he forbids members of the guild from using their talents as a means of political dissent, lest the power figures of the city begin to view the guild as a nuisance. Some of his fellows believe his caution stifles creativity, but his charming demeanor wins him far more allies than enemies.

Position and Duties

As Guildmaster of Bards, O'Lyre works diligently to advance the influence of his guild. He spends a great deal of his time in conference with the city's nobility, attempting to convince them that they gain great status by sponsoring musicians, poets, and thespians. Having grown up among the most dastardly scoundrels the city had to offer, he has little tolerance for those bards who flaunt the city's laws, fearing that to bring the city watch down upon the Fellowship would be the end of the organization. A long-standing and ill-understood feud with the Wizards Guild doesn't help matters. O'Lyre believes that agents of the Wizards spread lies about outlandish bard practices and rituals to discredit the organization in the eyes of the common man (and, perhaps more importantly, in the eyes of the guild's noble patrons).

"For ten pieces of gold, a sonnet, my friend.
For forty more, my honor.
For a hundred I'll play for your lady love,
And heap endless effusion upon her."
—Colin O'Lyre

History

Born in the poorest neighborhood of the Shadystreets district of Crow's End in the Year of Great Harvests (1325 DR), the boy who would become Colin O'Lyre faced few prospects for a rewarding life. He never knew his father, learning very early that the subject was an uncomfortable one for his sad, distant mother, a talented minstrel named Lanacass. A decade prior, the bardess had made the mistake of lampooning the ruthless Lord Carlton De Sheers, a horrible noble who recently had murdered his fifth wife. Though no one could prove what everyone suspected, a bawdy song called *Who Will Be Sixth, My Handsome Prince?* made its way from tavern to tavern, often credited to the witty but foolish Lanacass. This was in the era prior to the Champions Games, when lawlessness ruled the City of Ravens. The enraged Lord De Sheers ordered his agents to murder Lanacass' husband, an actor, during a public performance of *The Harper King* at the Ravens Bluff Playhouse. Stricken with grief and fearful for her life, Lanacass retreated to Crow's End, eventually falling into a pathetic life of prostitution and despair.

Colin's birth gave Lanacass hope. She filled his earliest days with instruction in the musical arts, teaching him that through song and performance he could bring joy to even the most desperate slum inhabitant. After a childhood disease robbed Colin of his once beautiful singing voice, Lanacass began to teach him the strings, allowing him to use the very lyre that eventually would give him his last name. He excelled in these studies, and together the pair made a modest success touring the run-down taverns of Crow's End as the Waif Matron and the Prince of Ales.

Lanacass died when Colin was only 11 years old, the victim of a savage knifing after a performance at the notorious Errant Fletcher tavern. Before then, however, she had revealed to her son the first glimpse the similarities between the structures of music and magic, and very soon, the now-orphaned performer was weaving magic into the melodies of his mother's lyre. A performance at the Champions Games in 1341 DR brought Colin O'Lyre to the attention of Veraghant, then the Guildmaster of Ravens Bluff's Fellowship of Bards. Veraghant offered to admit the young bard into the order, but claimed that Colin lacked the fullness of expression that would come to his music only from leaving the city and exploring the world. On the spot, he gave Colin 500 gold pieces, ordering him to venture into the Vast and return only when he had seen thirty things worth writing songs about and only after earning enough money to repay the loan threefold.

It was a gamble, but it certainly paid off. Colin returned to the city in 1359 DR, loaded down with a wealth of gold and experiences gained on a half-hundred adventures. He had traveled extensively during the Time of Troubles and his accounts of the marvels witnessed from Arabel to Eltabbar during the time when gods walked upon Faerûn enthralled the city for the better part of a year. During that time, Colin became known for his intricate dancing, unsurpassed skill with the lyre, and rakish good looks. He rose through the ranks of the guild faster than any bard on record (some say with the help of the then-retired Veraghant), eventually being named to its highest position in the Year of the Wyvern (1363 DR).

LADY LAUREN DEVILLARS

Though Charles Oliver O'Kane brought peace and sanity to the City of Ravens, he did so only as the result of plans laid by the cunning and influential Lady Lauren DeVillars. A popular philanthropist and fixture in the city's elite, many believe DeVillars represents the heart and soul of Ravens Bluff.

Lady Lauren DeVillars: Female human Clr20; CR 20; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 20d8+20; hp 129; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 27 (touch 16, flat-footed 25); Atk +20/+15/+10 melee (1d6+5, *+5 light mace*) or +17/+12/+7 ranged touch (by spell); AL N; SV Fort +14, Ref +9, Will +20; Str 11, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 20 (24), Cha 17.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +24, Diplomacy +26, Heal +17, Knowledge (local) +23, Knowledge (religion) +18, Listen +16, Scry +18, Spellcraft +22; Dodge, Enlarge Spell, Extend Spell, Luck of Heroes, Persistent Spell, Skill Focus: Knowledge (local), Spell Penetration, Twin Spell.

Spells per Day: 6/8/8/8/7/7/6/6/5/5. Base DC = 19 + spell level. Deity: Waukeen. Domains: Knowledge (all Knowledge skills are class skills), Trade (may *detect thoughts* 1/day as free-action spell-like ability, affecting one target and lasting 3 minutes).

Possessions: Amulet of natural armor +5, bracers of armor +6, brooch of shielding, figurines of wondrous power (golden lions), +5 light mace, pearl of wisdom +4, ring of protection +4.

APPEARANCE

Lady Lauren DeVillars exemplifies the very image of grace and civility. Though she used magical means to mask her age for much of the past four decades, Lady Lauren now eschews such pretension, preferring to age in public, where she has lived most of her privileged life. Her recent openness has done nothing to curb her popularity among all classes of the city—noble women take fashion cues from her elegant wardrobe and young girls in Crow's End often "play at the Lady," imagining themselves in her lofty position. Despite her warm presence, her fine-boned face belies a strong will and forceful personality.

PERSONALITY

The latest matriarch of the oldest and wealthiest of the city's noble houses, Lady DeVillars is personally responsible for many of the city's parks, statuary, social programs, and civic developments. She's justifiably proud of her accomplishments, and

demands the respect she no doubt deserves. Wholly dedicated to Ravens Bluff, she regards the city as her personal fief, caring for it as a stern parent cares for her children. Lady Lauren seldom leaves her extensive manor anymore; her few public appearances are events. She spares no expense when entertaining guests, always displaying accoutrements of unthinkable wealth, ever conscious of showing her visitors just how far her coffers, and influence, extends.

Position and Duties

Though quietly critical of Lady Mayor Thoden's administration, Lady Lauren has been extremely supportive of the return of her friend Charles O'Kane, who after all validated her political renovation plan following the Champions Games. In those days, she worked with her champion to restructure the city government, formulating civic procedures such as the Knights Council and engaging in expensive public works projects such as establishing better sewers and adding cobblestones to the majority of the city's roads.

As the nominal high priestess of the Bluff's temple of Waukeen, she holds a seat on the Clerical Circle, using it to influence religious politics and to unify the representatives of the civic religions for the betterment of the entire city. Since the return of Waukeen to the Realms, DeVillars has worked tirelessly to rebuild the Waukeenar church (in part so she can get back to enjoying her retirement once a suitable replacement for her current position can be found).

The owner of the Tempest Rose merchant house and the heir of centuries of keen investments, Lady DeVillars wields more economic clout than most entire noble houses, and is undoubtedly the richest individual in all of Ravens Bluff. The people look up to her as a mother figure (sometimes calling her "Lady Laur"); some folk whisper that the prosperity of the city is due entirely to her, and that Ravens Bluff must fall upon her death. Certain members of the Clerical Circle have discussed various magical means to prevent such an occurrence from ever happening.

History

The lands surrounding Ravens Bluff have known the influence of the DeVillars family for hundreds of years. Followers of the Merchant's Friend, the family has profited over the centuries from a combination of shrewd economic sense and fair dealings. Its latest heir, Lady Lauren DeVillars, was born in 1306 DR, just two years before early Ravenaar lords constructed walls around their young city. The young woman grew up at a time when Ravens Bluff was ruled by the lord with the most money or the lowest honor—a time of deep corruption and lawlessness referred to by locals as the period "when coins were king."

Despite her personal distaste for the political atmosphere, it was a time of profound influence for the clergy of Waukeen. As a young woman, Lauren quickly ascended the power structure of the church, gaining influence with the nobility all the while. By 1338 DR, Lauren had become high priestess of Waukeen, and stood among the half-dozen lords and ladies who dictated policy in the City of Ravens. Thus, in the Year of the Gate, Lady Lauren proposed the Champions Games in an effort to bring sanity to a chaotic government based solely upon the self-interest and whims of the lords who managed it. Perhaps as a testament to her negotiation skills, the lords agreed to her plan, which eventually resulted in the installation of Charles Oliver O'Kane as Lord Mayor of Ravens Bluff.

In the intervening years, Lady DeVillars has worked to better the city through philanthropy, occasionally hiring adventures to "nudge" things her way on the rare occasion that diplomacy fails to get her what she wants. Her wealth has made her the target of numerous kidnapping attempts, many of which have been foiled by her agents before they were allowed to hatch. She now spends a great deal of time doting upon her daughters, Bethany and Chantel (her husband, Lord Daimler DeVillars, is long dead), and her sons, Ramsey (who returned to the city during the recent war) and Drake (the so-called Black Knight of the Knight's Council).

"Be a dear and slay that glabrezu, would you?"

—Lady Lauren DeVillars

LADY PENELOPE NORWOOD

A rising star among the Bluff's cultural elite, Lady Penelope Norwood left a prestigious position as Dean of the Wizards Guild to manage the Ministry of Art, an organization that attempts to meld the principles of magecraft with the ideals of civic responsibility. A complex woman hatching a dozen secret plots, Lady Penelope cares almost as much for the city as she does for her personal agendas.

Penelope Norwood: Female human Evo19; CR 19; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 19d4+57; hp 106; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 27 (touch 20, flat-footed 24); Atk +13/+8 melee (1d6+4, *staff of power*) or +12/+7 ranged touch (by spell); SQ familiar benefits; AL CN; SV Fort +16, Ref +16, Will +21; Str 15, Dex 17, Con 16, Int 24 (28), Wis 16, Cha 17.

Skills and Feats: Alchemy +31, Bluff +14, Concentration +25, Diplomacy +14, Knowledge (arcana) +31, Knowledge (local) +31, Knowledge (nobility) +31, Knowledge (the planes) +31, Listen +14, Scry +31, Spellcraft +31, Spot +14; Empower Spell, Enlarge Spell, Extend Spell, Heighten Spell, Maximize Spell, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (evocation), Spell Mastery (*antimagic field, Bigby's crushing hand, disintegrate, greater dispelling, ice storm, improved invisibility, lightning bolt, meteor swarm, teleport without error*), Spell Penetration, Silent Spell, Still Spell, Twin Spell.

Special Qualities: **Familiar Benefits:** Grants Penelope Alertness when within reach, share spells, empathic link (1 mile), familiar may deliver touch spells, speak with familiar, may *scry* familiar once per day.

Spells per Day: 5/8/7/7/7/7/6/6/5/5. Base DC = 21 + spell level, 23 + spell level for evocation spells. Specialized School: Evocation. Prohibited School: Conjuration.

Spellbooks: (See sidebar on page 22.)

Possessions: Bracers of armor+7, cloak of resistance +5, headband of intellect +4, ring of protection +5, staff of power (10 charges).

Quint: Male raven familiar; CR 3; Tiny magical beast; HD 9d8; hp 53; Init +2; Spd 10 ft., fly 40 ft. (average); AC 24 (touch 14, flat-footed 22); Atk +12/+7 melee (1d2-5, claws); Face/Reach 2 ½ ft. by 2 ½ ft./0 ft.; SQ Empathic link, improved evasion, speak with birds, speak with master, SR 24, touch; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +8, Will +13; Str 1, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Listen +14, Spot +14; Weapon Finesse (claws).

Special Qualities: **Empathic Link (Su):** Can communicate telepathically with master to a distance of one mile. **Improved Evasion (Ex):** Reflex saves for half damage are at

Lady Penelope Norwood's SPELLBOOKS

(evocation spells in red)

0

arcane mark, dancing lights, daze, detect magic, detect poison, disrupt undead, flare, ghost sound, light, mage hand, mending, open/close, prestidigitation, read magic, resistance

1st

burning hands, change self, charm person, comprehend languages, endure elements, enlarge, expeditious retreat, feather fall, hold portal, identify, jump, magic missile, magic weapon, message, protection from chaos, protection from evil, protection from good, protection from law, shield, shocking grasp, spider climb, Tenser's floating disk, true strike

2nd

alter self, blur, bull's strength, cat's grace, continual flame, darkness, darkvision, daylight, detect thoughts, endurance, flaming sphere, invisibility, knock, levitate, locate object, mirror image, obscure object, protection from arrows, resist elements, see invisibility, shatter

3rd

blink, clairaudience/clairvoyance, dispel magic, displacement, fly, greater magic weapon, gust of wind, haste, hold person, lightning bolt, protection from elements, slow, suggestion, tongues, water breathing, wind wall

4th

arcane eye, charm monster, dimension door, dimensional anchor, fire shield, ice storm, improved invisibility, lesser geas, locate creature, minor globe of invulnerability, Otiluke's resilient sphere, phantasmal killer, polymorph other, polymorph self, scrying, shadow conjuration, shout, wall of fire, wall of ice

5th

dismissal, Bigby's interposing hand, cone of cold, contact other plane, dream, feeblemind, hold monster, magic jar, passwall, permanency, Rary's telepathic bond, seeming, sending, teleport, wall of force

6th

antimagic field, Bigby's forceful hand, chain lightning, contingency, disintegrate, flesh to stone, globe of, invulnerability, greater dispelling, mass haste, Otiluke's freezing sphere, permanent image, repulsion, stone to flesh, true seeing, veil

7th

banishment, Bigby's grasping hand, delayed blast fireball, ethereal jaunt, forcecage, greater scrying, Mordenkainen's sword, plane shift, prismatic spray, teleport without error

8th

Bigby's clenched fist, discern lies, etherealness, mind blank, Otiluke's telekinetic sphere, prismatic wall, sunburst

9th

Bigby's crushing hand, foresight, imprisonment, meteor swarm, prismatic sphere, teleportation circle

half or none. **Speak with Birds (Ex):** Can communicate with birds. Limited by Intelligence of conversing creatures. **Speak with Master (Ex):** Can communicate verbally with master as if using common language. **Touch (Su):** Can deliver touch spells for master.

Appearance

If Lady DeVillars represents the epitome of the graceful nobility, Magistrate Penelope Norwood can't be far behind. Though 52 years old, she wears the magical guise of a woman half her age, a shapely, strikingly attractive young coquette pined for by more than a few apprentices in the Wizards Guild. Lady Penelope prefers to dress in elaborate, tasteful robes and gowns accented with simple jewelry. She has kinky brown hair, deep black eyes, and flawless skin (she looks much the same under her magical visage, save thirty years older and possessed of a somewhat more earthy, homespun beauty). Her raven familiar, Quint, usually follows Lady Penelope about town and occasionally roosts on her shoulder or staff.

Personality

Like the magic used to mask her natural appearance, Lady Penelope cultivates a calm, quiet demeanor that hides the truth. Those who have wronged her report a combustible temper bordering on rage, as if Penelope still smolders from some past indignity. She manages to keep this aspect of her personality deeply buried, however, and most who have had dealings with her see only the soft, occasionally flirtatious side she chooses to reveal to the world. Driven almost completely by ambition, Lady Penelope long ago abandoned the role of subservient wife, and will do anything, including breaking the law (if she believes she can get away with it), to further her power and position.

Position and Duties

Lady Penelope recently abandoned her influential role as Dean of Evocation with Ravens Bluff's Wizards Guild to accept the duties of High Magistrate of the Ministry of Arts. The keys to the vaults of both the guild and ministry have allowed her access to nearly every spell imaginable (save those of the Conjuration school, from which she is barred). She funnels her ambition into solid management of the ministry, which serves as an advisory body to the Lord Mayor and Councils on matters arcane. Prior to her appointment by the former mayor, Amber Thoden, the body had no single ruler, instead operating more as a committee with a nominal speaker elected by the assembly every two years. A few of the ministers distrust her, detecting a sense of the true woman beneath the veneer, but she has thus far managed to win over most of the fourteen arcane spellcasters who sit on the council.

History

Born to the declining Sarpentar noble house in the Year of the Starving (1320 DR), Penelope was enrolled in magical instruction well before becoming a teenager. Her parents hoped that an accomplished spellcaster would make a more attractive "catch" for a wealthier noble, as the family's debts had grown so onerous that absorption by another house seemed the only logical means of maintaining their exquisite lifestyle.

In 1342 DR, a year after her mother was killed in an "accident" during the Champions Games, the family got their wish, as Lady Penelope wed the wealthy Lord Transtible Norwood, eldest scion of a powerful Ravenian house. Lady Penelope gained little from the arrangement, bartering her family's meager holdings for matrimony with a dullard far more interested in the prospects of the morning hunt than in his beautiful young wife. For a time, Penelope made the best of it, producing three children. Her eldest, a pair of male twins who are the very image of their father, fill her with disappointment, but she remains keenly interested in the progress of her daughter, Lady Stelma Seirie, who is now practicing as an enchantress with the Wizards Guild.

As recently as fifteen years ago, Penelope had an epiphany in which she realized that any progress she made for herself would be born of dedication and hard work. She engaged in nighttime visits to Churthryn Hall, one of the Norwood family holdings. Appropriated from a debtor a century ago, the aging manor had been converted into a leper colony and private madhouse for the children of noble families. The latter struck Lady Penelope as a useful source of information that could be used to blackmail her peers, and from that point her career began its meteoric rise.

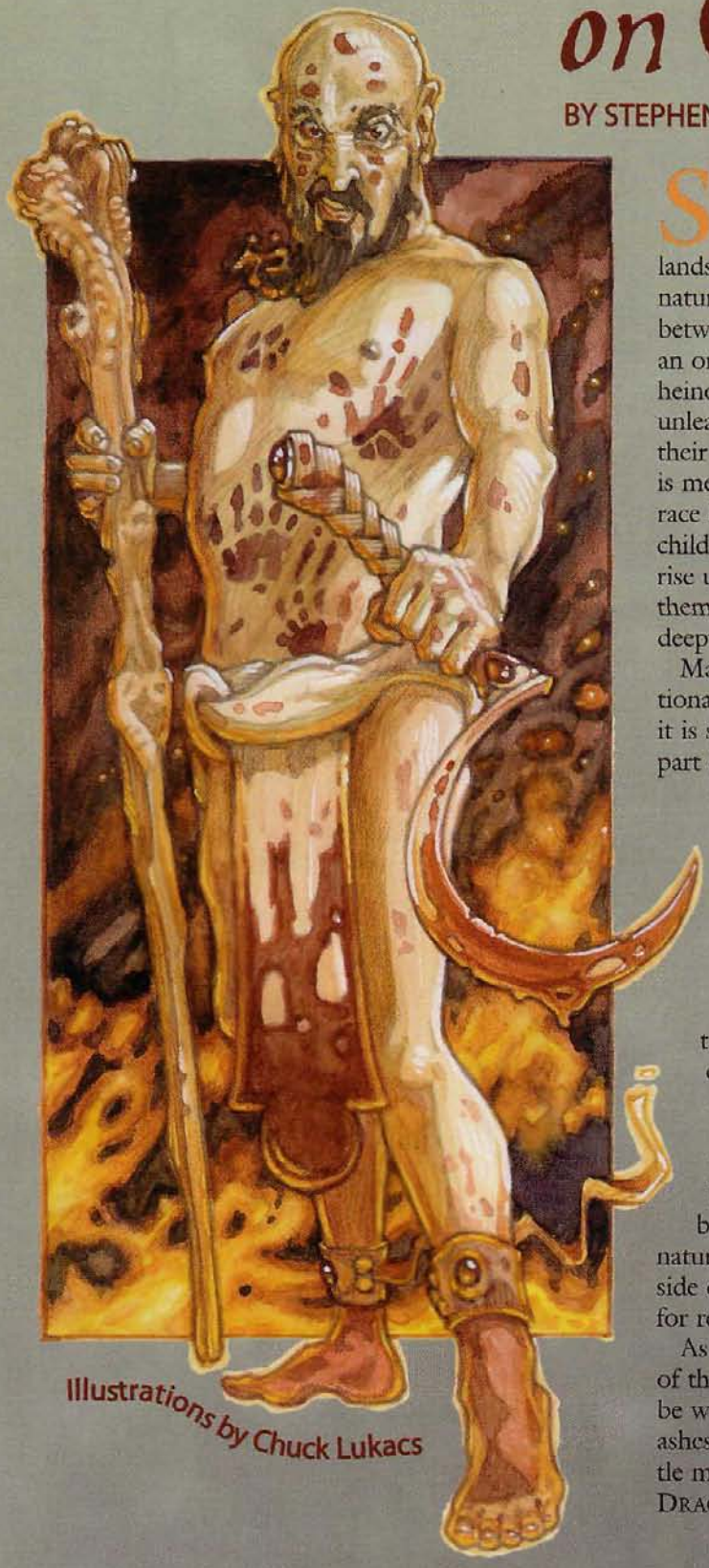
Her nomination to the post of High Magistrate validated her years of work in the guild (for she coupled her blackmail and secret double-dealings with very public efficiency), and she attacked the new position with vigor. Unfortunately, her appointment came after the ministry had been deeply damaged by the aftermath of the war, and only by currying personal favor with the now-disgraced Amber Lynn Thoden. Those who have been paying attention to Penelope's wizardly career know her as a profound opportunist willing to enter dangerous alliances if it looks as though it might benefit her in the end. She plays at valuing the best interests of the city, but acts on them only when they serve the best interests of Lady Penelope Norwood.

AN ABBREVIATED • *Raven's Bluff* • TIMELINE

1296	Charles Oliver O'Kane born in Teshendale.
1306	Lady Lauren DeVillars born to Lord Malamin and Lady Salinay on the DeVillars estates.
1316	Teshendale falls to Zhentil Keep. Charles O'Kane, now 20 years old and full of bravado, fights among the Dale rebels for a time before falling in with a band of adventurers called the Company of the Scalding Sword. He later travels to Mulmaster, following tales of a military challenge to the authority of Zhentil Keep.
1320	Lady Penelope Sarpentar born in Sarpentar House.
1325	Colin O'Lyre born in Crow's End.
1336	Daggerdale Falls to the Zhents. It becomes clear to O'Kane that Mulmaster will not challenge Zhentil Keep. He loses hope and begins to wander south.
1341	Lady Lauren DeVillars holds the Champion's Games. Charles Oliver O'Kane becomes the first Mayor of Ravens Bluff.
1342	Penelope Sarpentar weds Lord Transtible Norwood. Sarpentar holdings transfer to Norwood care as part of Penelope's dowry.
1355	Year of the Harp. (Date of *Gateway to Ravens Bluff, the* LIVING CITY™.)
1356	Ravens Bluff reaps bureaucrats turned out by Lashan of Scardale.
1357	Year of the Prince. (Date of the FORGOTTEN REALMS® *Campaign Set.*)
1358	Time of Troubles. Gods walk Faerûn.
1360	Tuigan Horde invades Faerûn.
1363	Colin O'Lyre named Guildmaster of the Fellowship of Bards.
1369	Late in the year, Deputy Mayor Howard Holiday leaves the city on a secret investigation to the east. He never returns. The elf Belanor Fenmarel is named Deputy Mayor of Ravens Bluff.
1370	Chief Prelate Sirrus Melandor killed. Ravens Bluff besieged by the armies of the warlord Myrkyssa Jelan. Demons in service to Jelan kidnap Mayor Charles O'Kane, leaving the city in the command of Acting Mayor Fenmarel, who is later indicted as a co-conspirator of the warlord. The city government falls to Acting Mayor Arvin Kothanos. O'Kane rescued from captivity. After Jelan's forces are defeated, Kothanos essentially sells the mayoralty to the highest bidder. Lady Amber Lynn Thoden, a hero of the war, becomes the second Mayor of Ravens Bluff. (Date of *The City of Ravens Bluff* sourcebook.)
1371	The foggy Veil lingers longer than usual in the city, presaging the arrival of the Soulstorm. Waukeen returns to the Realms. The community of Ravens Deep established in the Underdark near Old Sarbreen. Lord Blacktree's forces rescue the *Orb of Protection* from the Underdark, using it to destroy the artifact known as the *Heart of Bane*. Blacktree dies. Strange shadow creatures haunt Ravens Bluff. Mayor Thoden revealed as Myrkyssa Jelan late in the year. (Date of the *City of Ravens* novel.)
1372	The current year. (Date of the FORGOTTEN REALMS® *Campaign Setting* hardcover.)

Taking Revenge on Civilization

BY STEPHEN RADNEY-MACFARLAND AND ERIK MONA



Illustrations by Chuck Lukacs

Sometimes, when the civilized races verge too far into the wilderness, when the political greed of an ambitious prince forces expansion into untamed lands, a lesson must be taught. As the arbiters of nature's laws, druids often act as intermediaries between man and beast, ensuring that a balance is kept, an order retained. Some acts of expansionism are so heinous, however, that the servants of nature must unleash great destructive energies of vengeance against their civilized kin. In such cases, clear-cutting of forests is met with clear-cutting of city buildings. An animal race hunted to extinction is paid back in kind upon the children of the hunters. Rivers poisoned by negligence rise up and flood the communities that depend upon them. To exact such revenge, druids turn to deepwood avengers.

Many druids and nature clerics form a kind of emotional symbiotic bond with the lands they protect, and it is said that when those lands fall to axe and fire, a part of the protector dies. When creep of civilized lands destroys a wilderness, a dark cabal of druids gathers to initiate that land's protector into their mysterious order. Many turn them aside, moving on to shepherd new lands. Some, however, join their brotherhood, and swear themselves to exacting harsh sentences from those who have wronged nature.

Many avengers enlist the aid of animals, elementals, and clerics of nature gods to aid them in their cause. Among their more disturbing allies are the arborrors, creatures of destruction crafted from the corpses of ruined trees. Few agents of vengeance are more terrifying than the constructs known as plague winds, spirits of elemental air bound to the filthy byproducts of crimes against nature. The sadistic cinciut, which represent the darkest side of the fey, often gleefully join in the druids' quest for retribution.

As civilized lands continue to grow, so do the ranks of the deepwood avengers. Theirs is a war that will not be won with a single battle. It is a war of blood and ashes and broken stone, and very soon, its lines of battle may be drawn upon your DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® campaign.

Table 1-01: The Deepwood Avenger

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day
1st	+1	+2	+0	+2	Civilized enemy +1	+1 level of existing class
2nd	+2	+3	+0	+3	*Rusting grasp*	+1 level of existing class
3rd	+3	+3	+1	+3	Lament to the wounded world +2	+1 level of existing class
4th	+4	+4	+1	+4	Civilized enemy +2	+1 level of existing class
5th	+5	+4	+1	+4	Persistent *barkskin*	+1 level of existing class
6th	+6	+5	+2	+5	Lament to the wounded world +3	+1 level of existing class
7th	+7	+5	+2	+5	Civilized enemy +3	+1 level of existing class
8th	+8	+6	+2	+6	Awakening gift	+1 level of existing class
9th	+9	+6	+3	+6	Lament to the wounded world +4	+1 level of existing class
10th	+10	+7	+3	+7	Civilized enemy +4, compost enemy	+1 level of existing class

NEW PRESTIGE CLASS: DEEPWOOD AVENGER

Deepwood avengers stand at the vanguard of the druidic assault against the civilized world. They gather in blasted groves to mourn the demise of natural lands and plan strategies against those who would wound the earth. Once connected to the force of nature by bonds of protection and allegiance, deepwood avengers answer the loss of those lands with a call to arms. The walls of "great" cities will fall beneath the might of powerful elemental forces, they claim. Gentrified streets and neighborhoods will grow thick with kudzu, and once again the tread of mighty beasts will cross lands once marred by structures of dead wood and stone. Then, nature will have its revenge.

Deepwood avengers draw their ranks from druids and clerics of nature gods. Such folk feel stronger connections to the earth—when an unnatural calamity strikes the natural world, they feel the assault in their bones, hearing in the cries of dying animals a plea for vengeance. Members of the more cosmopolitan classes, such a most rogues, wizards, and sorcerers, are far more likely to be victims of deepwood avengers than adherents to their strict doctrines. Some rangers heed the call of vengeance, but their connection to nature is somewhat more tenuous—only the most powerful among them share so great a bond with the world.

PCs who base their activities in cities most often will encounter deepwood avengers as enemies. Slow to reason and quick to assault their enemies with *awakened* trees and animals, avengers make for difficult roleplaying challenges. Though difficult in the extreme, a silver-tongued and most importantly honest cosmopolitan diplomat can dissuade a deepwood avenger from violence, but generally only after making the types of promises delegated adventurers seldom have the authority to give.

Hit Die: d8.

REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a deepwood avenger a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Alignment: Any neutral.

Perform (singing): 4 ranks.

Wilderness Lore: 8 ranks.

Spells: Ability to cast *poison*.

Special: Must have been associated, either as an inhabitant or protector, with a wilderness region destroyed by the encroachment of civilized lands.

CLASS SKILLS

The deepwood avenger class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Animal Empathy (Cha), Concentration (Con), Handle Animal (Cha), Heal (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Intuit Direction (Wis), Knowledge (nature) (Int), Move Silently (Dex), Perform (Cha), Spellcraft (Int), Wilderness Lore (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the deepwood avenger prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Deepwood avengers are proficient with the following weapons: club, dagger, dart, halfspear, longspear, quarterstaff, scimitar, sickle, shortspear, and sling. Their spiritual oaths prohibit them from using weapons other than these. They are proficient with light and medium armors but are prohibited from wearing any metal armor. They are skilled with shields but must use only wooden ones.

A deepwood avenger who wears prohibited armor or wields a prohibited weapon is unable to use any of his magical powers while doing so and for 24 hours thereafter. (Note: A deepwood avenger can use wooden items that have been altered by the *ironwood* spell so that they function as though they were steel.)

Spellcasting: A deepwood avenger continues training in magic. Thus, when a new deepwood avenger level is gained, the character gains new spells per day as if he had also gained a level in a divine spellcasting class he belonged to before he added the prestige class. He does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained (improved chance of controlling or rebuking undead, metamagic, wild shape ability, and so on). This essentially means that he adds the level of deepwood avenger to the level of some other spellcasting class the character has, then determines spells per day and caster level accordingly. For example, if Bestamus, a 10th-level druid, gains a level as a deepwood avenger, he gains new spells as if he had risen to 11th level as a druid, but uses the other deepwood avenger aspects of level progression such as base attack bonus and save bonuses. If he next gains a level as a druid, making him an 11th-level druid/1st-level deepwood avenger, he gains spells as if he had risen to 12th level as a druid.

If a character had more than one spellcasting class before he became a deepwood avenger the player must decide to which class he adds each level of deepwood avenger for purposes of determining spells per day when he adds the new level.

Civilized Enemy (Su): Even the newest deepwood avenger initiate has made extensive study of his civilized enemies, noting where their devotion to the slothful manifesto of civilization has made them weak. Such study allows the deepwood avenger to take advantage of those weaknesses in combat, granting him a +1 bonus to weapon and damage rolls against civilized creatures. A deepwood avenger also gets the damage bonus with ranged weapons, but only against targets within 30 feet. The bonus doesn't apply to creatures that are immune to critical hits. For purposes of this bonus, "civilized" creatures include those creatures that use weapons or armor prohibited to the deepwood avenger. (At the DM's discretion, he may exempt a given creature who meets the requirements but is nonetheless primitive. A skald for the local hillman tribe might be a bard, for instance, but if he's never set foot in a city, the DM may invalidate an attempt to use this bonus against him.)

This bonus does not stack with the ranger's favored enemy bonus. At 4th level, the bonus increases to +2. At 7th level, it increases to +3. A 10th-level deepwood avenger receives a +4 bonus against civilized enemies.

***Rusting Grasp* (Sp):** Three times per day, a deepwood avenger of 2nd level or higher may cast *rusting grasp* as a druid of his character level.

Lament to the Wounded World (Su): Before entering battle, deepwood avengers of 3rd level or higher often sing the haunting lament to the wounded world, a dirge recounting the many indignities the earth has suffered at the hands of those who would conquer it. Singing the song is a full-round action. Any animal, plant, or elemental (in addition to the singer) within a 30-ft. burst of the singer becomes so incensed and sorrowful at the world's loss that they gain a +2 luck bonus on attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, saves, and skill checks for a duration of 1 round per caster level. The song may be attempted twice per day. The luck bonus lasts for one round per caster level.

At 5th level, the bonus increases to +3. At 9th level, it increases to +4.

Persistent *barkskin* (Ex): At 6th level, the deepwood avenger's skin naturally becomes as hard as tree bark, granting the avenger a +3 natural armor bonus. At the 12th character level, the bonus increases to +5. This natural armor bonus does not stack with the similar bonus conferred by the *barkskin* spell.

Awakening Gift (Su): Deepwood avengers of 8th level and above lose only 100 xp when awakening animals or plants. If he does not ordinarily have access to it, the deepwood avenger gains the ability to cast *awaken* as one of his 5th-level spells.

Compost Enemy (Sp): Once per day, a deepwood avenger can attempt to mulch an enemy into compost, returning its essence to the earth, where it might rejuvenate the soil. The deepwood avenger can select a Large or smaller target he can see within 100 feet. With the words "return to the earth that bore you," the target must make a Fortitude save (DC 15 + Wisdom bonus) to avoid being reduced to so much fecund waste, killing it instantly. If the save is successful (or if the target is Huge or larger), it instead is dealt 3d6+15 points of damage. This is a death effect.

ARBORROR

Huge Plant
Hit Dice: 6d8+30 (57 hp)
Initiative: -1 (Dex)
Speed: 20 ft.
AC: 17 (-2 size, -1 Dex, +10 natural)
Attacks: 2 slams +4 melee
Damage: Slam 2d6+9
Face/Reach: 10 ft. by 10 ft./15 ft.
Special Attacks: Breath weapon
Special Qualities: Plant, ashen curse, fire resistance 20
Saves: Fort +10, Ref +1, Will +2
Abilities: Str 28, Dex 9, Con 20, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 1
Climate/Terrain: Any land (except desert)
Organization: Solitary or band (2–8)
Challenge Rating: 5
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: 7-16 (Huge); 17-18 (Gargantuan)

Crafted from the burnt-out lifeless husks of trees felled by the expanse of civilized lands into the wilderness, arborrors represent the shock troops in the deepwood avengers' war against civilization. Utilizing secret spells and rituals, powerful druids trace sacred runes upon the trunks of once great trees, connecting the fallen plants to the universal consciousness of nature.

The tree-corpses gain a vaguely humanoid appearance with hollow, empty facial features and powerful arms growing fully-formed from the trunk. They move by pulling themselves along the ground with their extensive, atrophied root systems. Few arborrors sport leaves in their moribund state, but all nurture an intense hatred for denizens of civilized lands.

Arborrors speak the Druidic tongue in addition to the native language of the druid who created them.

COMBAT

Driven by hatred, arborrors know little of tactics. Most follow the orders of their creator, treating combat as a relished opportunity to smash an enemy into paste with their powerful limbs.

Ashen Curse (Ex): The arborror's ashen form teems with the corruption of environmental destruction. Any martial or exotic weapon that deals damage to the arborror must make a Fortitude save or suffer 1d4 points of damage. This damage bypasses the weapon's hardness, and counts as a +2 weapon for purposes of damaging magical weapons.

Breath Weapon (Su): Arborrors can unleash a gout of ash in a 60-foot cone every 1d4 rounds (but not more than five times per day). The ash causes 2d8 points of damage—Reflex save (DC 18) for half. Those who fail to save must make an additional Fortitude save (DC 18) or contract a foul disease known as Gaea's bile—inhaled, incubation period 1 day; damage 1d8 temporary Constitution. Each day thereafter, on a failed save, the creature suffers damage as normal and must immediately succeed at another Fortitude save or 1 of the damage points represents permanent Constitution drain (see Disease, page 74 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

Plant: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and polymorphing. Not subject to critical hits.

CINCIUT (RED CAPS)

Medium-size Fey
Hit Dice: 2d6 (7 hp)
Initiative: +6
Speed: 30 ft., 20 ft. (clumsy)
AC: 15 (+2 Dex, +2 leather armor, +1 natural)
Attacks: Rapier +4 melee, or composite short bow +3 ranged
Damage: 1d6 + poison
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Poison
Special Qualities: Hide in plain sight, light sensitivity, low-light vision, skills
Saves: Fort +0, Ref +5, Will +5

Abilities: Str 11, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 13
Skills: Hide +5, Jump +10, Move Silently +4, Spot +4, Wilderness Lore +4
Feats: Improved Initiative, Track, Weapon Finesse (rapier), Weapon Focus (rapier)
Climate/Terrain: Temperate and warm land
Organization: Solitary, gang (2-4), or band (6-11)
Challenge Rating: 3
Treasure: No coin, no goods, double items
Alignment: Always neutral evil
Advancement: By character class

Some fey are known for their mischievous ways, but one is known for mischief only in malevolence: the cinciut. Cinciut are the assassins of the fey world. Cheerful in their love of death, they sometimes hire themselves out to ruthless lords or desperate druids as mercenaries or assassins. They use the blood of their enemies to die their pointed hats a dark crimson.

Sometimes called red caps, the cinciut have humanlike heads torsos, and abdomens, all as dark as night. Their legs, while the same color, are of the same form as those of crickets; leading some sages to wonder weather or not red caps are some degenerate form of grig. Their bat-like wings are made of shadow-stuff instead of skin. These fierce fairies wear their red hair in braids, which some adorn with gems for each person they have slain. Their eyes are large and faceted like gemstones, or insect eyes, but are dull and dark. Their legs look like those of a deep black and shiny cricket. They usually clad themselves in skintight leather armor, and always arm themselves with fine rapiers.

COMBAT

The cinciut are cheerfully driven toward the macabre arts. It is said that they enjoy death as much as other fey enjoy dance, and usually go at their dark work with off-color or morbid jests coming from lips twisted into ghoulish smiles. They strike first from the shadow, and creep back into the shadows whenever a fight is not going their way. Typically cinciut fight in pairs.

Poison (Ex): These fey naturally secrete a lesser form of the shadow essence poison from spiky hairs on their cricket-like legs. Each cinciut produces enough of this poison to foul their weapons with it up to three times a day. For a cinciut to coat its weapon with this shadow's drip, they must expend a move-equivalent action—Shadow's Drip: Injury, Fortitude save (DC 13); initial damage 1 temporary Strength; secondary damage 1d2 temporary Strength; price per dose 100 gp.

Hide in Plain Sight (Su): Cinciut can use the Hide skill even while being observed. As long as they are within 10 feet of some sort of shadow, cinciut can hide themselves from view in the open without anything to actually hide behind. They cannot, however, hide in their own shadows due to the fact that they don't produce them in any lighting conditions.

Light Sensitivity (Ex): Cinciut suffer a –1 penalty to attack rolls in bright sunlight or within the radius of a *daylight* spell.

Skills: Due to their cricket-like legs and shadow wings, cinciut, while poor fliers, are uncanny jumpers. Cinciut gain a +8 racial bonus to Jump checks. Their association with darkness and shadows grants them a +10 racial bonus to Hide checks

COMPANION OF FLAME AND HATE

Sometimes a druid's home comes under siege. Sometimes, when "civilized" forces wantonly destroy the bounty of nature for their own benefit and pillage the very locations that give druids

and their allies' power, nature's protectors are forced to rise up and attack with flame and hate.

A companion of flame and hate is created when a druid, by way of a ritual sacrifice, fuses elemental fire with an animal companion. This transformation burns out the animal's insides, replacing its organs with a conflagration of elemental fire. The soul of the animal still drives the creature, but it is infused with the manic and fuming aspects of a fiery existence. Faster, fiercer, and without mercy it frantically hunts and destroys the enemies of its human companion for five full days, at the end of which time the elemental fire consumes the animal's spark of life in a slow and smoldering whimper.

Needless to say, the creation of the companion of flame and hate is a rare undertaking, initiated under only the most dire circumstances. It is only with a sense of intense remorse or when affected by the madness of red-hot anger that a champion of the natural order will create the *douse of flame and hate* (see sidebar) and ask its animal companions to make the flaming sacrifice. Few animal companions refuse. Still, a druid who creates a companion of flame and hate almost always becomes an ex-druid. If that ex-druid then seeks *atonement*, the casting druid will lose 1,000 XP, rather than the normal 500 XP to absolve his fellow priest.

CREATING A COMPANION OF FLAME AND HATE

"Companion of flame and hate" is a template that can be added to any corporeal animal that is currently the animal companion of a druid or ranger (i.e., under the effects of an *animal friendship* spell). That creature is hereafter referred to as the base creature. The creature gains the fire subtype. It uses the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

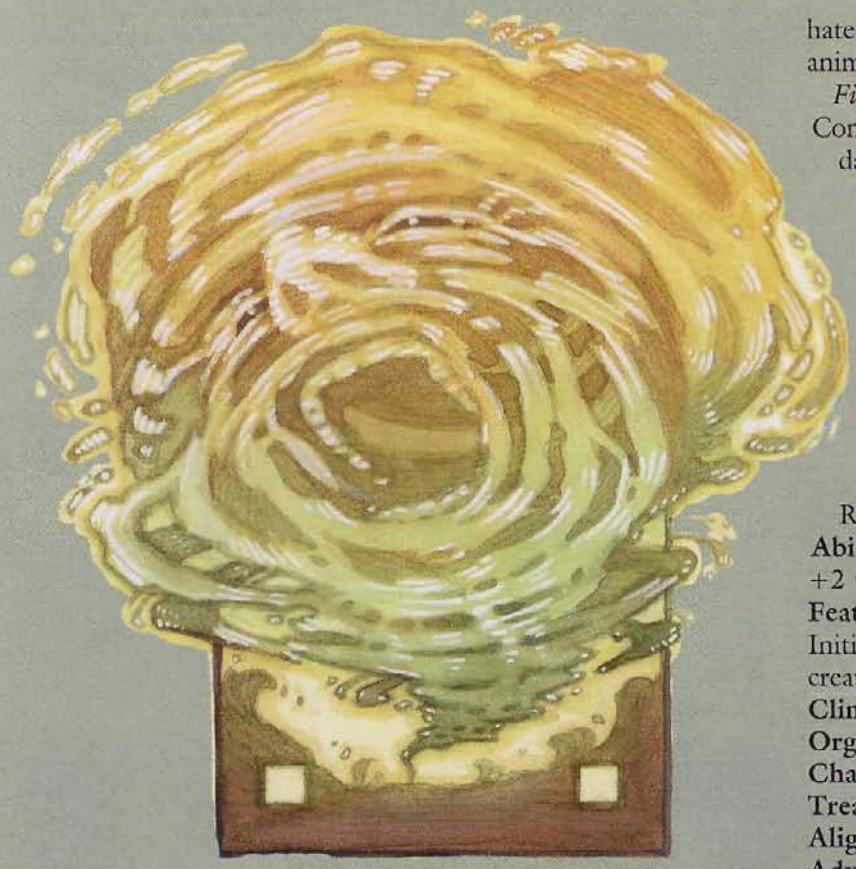
AC: As base creature, +4 haste bonus, +2 natural bonus.
Damage: As base creature, plus heat (see below).

THE DOUSE OF FLAME AND HATE

When a druid wishes to convert his animal companion to a companion of flame and hate, he must submerge it in a *douse of flame and hate*, a kind of magical oil (see *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 109 under the sub-head Potions). A douse of flame and hate usually is prepared in a cauldron of a size appropriate to handle the creature or creatures the druid wishes to convert. The submersion process takes two full rounds—entering or leaving the douse provokes attacks of opportunity.

Once created, the douse is active for five days, during which it can transform into a companion of flame and hate any submerged animal bound to the creating druid by the *animal friendship* spell.

Caster Level: 13th; *Prerequisites:* Brew Potion, *awaken, dominate animal, firestorm*; *Market Price:* 3,000 gp; Weight: 2 lb.



Special Attacks: A companion of flame and hate retains all the special attacks of the base animal and also gains those listed below.

Spouts of Flame (Su): A companion of flame and hate can strike at its enemies by emitting a spout of flame from its body. This spout usually emanates from its mouth, but it can burn through skin—the companion has the ability to release this flame attack from anywhere on its body. This attack is a 30-foot-long cone which can be released every 2d4 rounds; damage depends upon size of the base creature: Fine, Diminutive, and Tiny creatures confer 1d4 points of damage. Small and Medium creatures confer 1d6 points of damage, Large 1d8, and Huge 1d10; Reflex save (DC 15) for half damage. The spout of flame also ignites any flammable materials within the cone. Companions of flame and hate with bite attacks can use the spout of flame while biting.

Heat (Ex): A companion of flame and hate generates so much heat that its mere touch deals additional fire damage, based upon the size of the base creature: 1d4 points of damage for Fine, Diminutive, and Tiny creatures, 1d6 points of damage for Small and Medium-size creatures, 1d8 points of damage for Large creatures, and 1d10 points of damage for Huge creatures.

Special Qualities: A companion of flame and hate retains all the special qualities of the base animal and also gains those listed below.

Fire subtype: Immune to fire damage. Companions of flame and hate take double damage from cold unless a saving throw for half damage is allowed, in which case they take half damage on a success and double damage on a failure.

***Haste* (Ex):** Companions of flame and hate always act as if they were affected by the *haste* spell.

Saves: Base saves are as the base animal. In addition, companions of flame and hate receive a +2 racial bonus to Reflex saves.

Abilities: A companion of flame and hate gains +2 to Dexterity.

Feats: Same as the base creature, with Improved Initiative added if not already part of the base creature's set of feats.

Climate/Terrain: Any land or underground
Organization: Solitary or Pack (2-4)
Challenge Rating: As the base creature +2
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral evil
Advancement: Same as the base creature

SAMPLE COMPANION OF FLAME AND HATE

This examples uses an advanced (8 HD) lion as the base creature.

Companion of Flame and Hate
Large Animal (Fire)
Hit Dice: 8d8+16 (52 hp)
Initiative: +7 (Dex, Improved Initiative)
Speed: 40 ft.
AC: 22 (-1 size, +4 Dex, +5 natural, +4 haste)
Attacks: 2 claw +11 melee, bite +6 melee
Damage: Claw 1d4+5, bite 1d8+2
Facing/Reach: 5 ft by 10 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Heat, spouts of flame, pounce, improved grab, rake 1d4+2
Special Qualities: Fire subtype, haste, scent
Saves: Fort +8, Ref +12, Will +3
Abilities: Str 21, Dex 19, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6
Skills: Listen +5, Move Silently +11, Spot +5
Feats: Improved Initiative
Climate/Terrain: Any land or underground
Organization: Solitary or pack (2-4).
Challenge Rating: 5
Treasure: None
Alignment: Neutral

PLAGUE WIND

Huge Construct (Air)
Hit Dice: 7d10 (39 hp)
Initiative: +2
Speed: 30 ft., 40 ft. (perfect)
AC: 20 (+2 Dex, -2 size +10 natural)
Attacks: Slam +12 melee
Damage: Slam 2d6+9
Face/Reach: 10 ft. by 10 ft./15 ft.
Special Attacks: Disease, stench
Special Qualities: Construct
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +0
Abilities: Str 28, Dex 15, Con —, Int — , Wis 7, Cha 1
Climate/Terrain: Temperate and warm land or underground
Organization: Solitary, or gang (2-4)
Challenge Rating: 6
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: 8-16 HD (Huge); 16-32 HD (Gargantuan)

Crafted from the stuff of violent gales and the filth of natural corruption, this weird wispy automaton is akin to golems in that it is the fusion of material, ritual, and elemental force. Unlike traditional golems, which gain their animus from the Elemental Plane of Earth, plague winds are fueled with a spirit of air from the corresponding elemental plane. Druids sometimes construct plague winds to enforce nature's wrath upon their enemies.

The plague wind looks like a swirling air elemental, but within its torrid winds festers the very essence of rot and death. Bones, dry leaves, sickening mud and slime, and decaying flesh whirl around a plague wind's form in a tornado of filth.

COMBAT

Since those who create them are more keenly aware of the alien desires of elementals, the elemental animi of plague winds more willingly serve their creators than do their golem cousins. A plague wind's creator can command it if the plague wind is within a quarter mile. This empathic link functions identically to the one that some spellcasters share with their familiars (see *Player's Handbook*, page 51). If uncommanded, the plague wind follows its last instruction to the best of its ability, though if attacked it returns the attack.

The commands given to a plague wind by its creator can be somewhat more complex than those given to a golem. While a golem might be commanded to "remain in an area and attack all creatures that enter," a plague wind's command can be "remain in an area and attack all creatures that enter. If any use magic, attack them immediately and continue until all intruders are killed."

Construct: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poisons, disease, and similar effects. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

Disease (Ex): Swirling in the devastating eddies of the plague wind are not only the overt remnants of death and decay, but also their agents. With every successful slam attack, there is a chance that the plague wind infects its victim with the debilitating disease known as the red ache—injury, Fortitude save (DC 15), incubation 1d3 days; damage 1d6 temporary Strength.

Stench (Ex): The stink of death and disease that emanates from the plague wind is sickening. Those within 20 feet must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 16) or become ill, suffering a –2 circumstance penalty to all attacks, saves, and skill checks for 1d6+4 minutes.

CONSTRUCTION

A plague wind costs 10,000 gp to create. This cost includes all the materials and spell components that are consumed or become part of the creation.

A plague wind must be fashioned from wind and fused with rot, corruption, and disease. To do this the creator must enact a long series of complicated rituals that involve the creation and maintenance of a disease pit, a hole in which the creator allows and even assists a festering morass of dead animals, stagnant water, and decaying plant matter. The disease pit takes two months to nurture appropriately. The creator must labor for at least 8 hours each day. While not actively working on the ritual he must rest and can perform no other activities except eating, sleeping, or talking. If he misses a day, the process fails, and the ritual must be started anew; any gp (but not xp) spent on the failed ritual is lost.

Completing the ritual requires casting *control winds*, *insect plague*, *harm*, and *finger of death* on the final day of the ritual and drains 2,000 xp from the creator. He must cast the spells personally, but they can come from outside sources, such as scrolls.

Talking the Tree Tongue

BY LANCE HAWVERMALE ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHUCK LUKACS

Fáilte Romhat!

Or . . . "Welcome!" in modern English.

Of the many historic milieus that have influenced the roleplaying community, few have affected gaming campaign settings as profoundly as the era of the ancient Celts. The Celtic tribes, who inhabited western Europe from Italy to Ireland, can claim responsibility for a great deal of current gaming lore, from deities to heroic legends, to an assortment of magical items and spells. Most prominently, however, the Celtic mythos inspired an entire character archetype—the druid—which functions as a character class in many of today's roleplaying games, specifically the druids of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® and the druidic shamans of *Shadowrun*, as detailed in the *Player's Handbook* and the *London Sourcebook*, respectively. And though the druid of D&D®, *Shadowrun*, and other gaming worlds often bears little resemblance to his historic counterpart, many campaigns still strive to style their druidic orders in a manner consistent with the druids of old. Such historically-conscious players and gamemasters will find themselves better prepared for this task when they make use of an actual druidic language, as practiced by the Celtic scholars of ages past. Players are encouraged to delve into one of the true mysteries of the Celtic world: Ogham, language of the Irish druids.

Historic Ogham

Ogham (pronounced OH-yam) was a form of written communication practiced only by those druids inhabiting the island of Ireland. The druids themselves, both those on the European continent and the British Isles, were members of a social class responsible for the keeping of laws, the instruction of the lower classes, and the administration of justice. Rather than priests, the druids were philosophers who contemplated the nature of the physical universe and its relationships to the morals of mankind. The druids also were

New Shadowrun Spell: Ogham Encryption

Indirect Illusion Spell
Type: M; Target: 4; Duration: S; Drain: L

This spell permits the subject to scramble any type of text he encounters so that it appears in Ogham form. The information so enciphered can be any one hardcopy book, printed letter, Matrix file, or any other such medium that makes use of the written word. The coded material does not need to remain within the subject's sight, although the spell is broken if the material moves beyond a range of 1 kilometer per Force point. If the enchanted item remains within range, the spell stays in effect as long as it is sustained, intelligible only to those who can read Ogham.

known as judges, historians, poets, musicians, physicians, and seers.

Due to a rigid theological taboo, the druids on the continent, or Gaulish druids, were expressly prohibited from committing the spoken word to a physical existence. In his chronicles of the Celts, Julius Caesar wrote that the druids "commit to memory immense amounts of poetry, and so some of them continue their studies for twenty years. They consider it improper to commit their studies to writing, although they use the Greek alphabet for almost everything else." Though in many respects Caesar's estimation was an accurate one, his understanding of the complex Celtic belief in Truth was severely limited. In effect, the Celts saw Truth as divine law, and the members of their intellectual caste, or druids, were the interpreters of that law.

The prohibition against writing, as ordained by the Gaulish druids, was rooted in the Celtic philosophy that, "By Truth the earth endures." To the Celts, Truth was the foundation of things both heavenly and temporal. Speaking the Truth often brought about magical effects, as was the case with the Celtic hero Cormac, who allegedly was given a cup which shattered when three lies were spoken over it, and reformed itself when three Truths were told. Druidic teachers instructed their pupils in "*an Fhírinne in aghaidh an tSaoil*," or "the Truth against the world." As it was an integral component of both their civil and criminal law, the power of Truth affected everyone, from the poorest shepherd to the most esteemed warrior-king. In fact, the Old Irish word for truth is the basis for several terms of modern Irish speech: holiness, righteousness, religion and, above all, justice. Truth, then, was the highest concept of druidic thought.

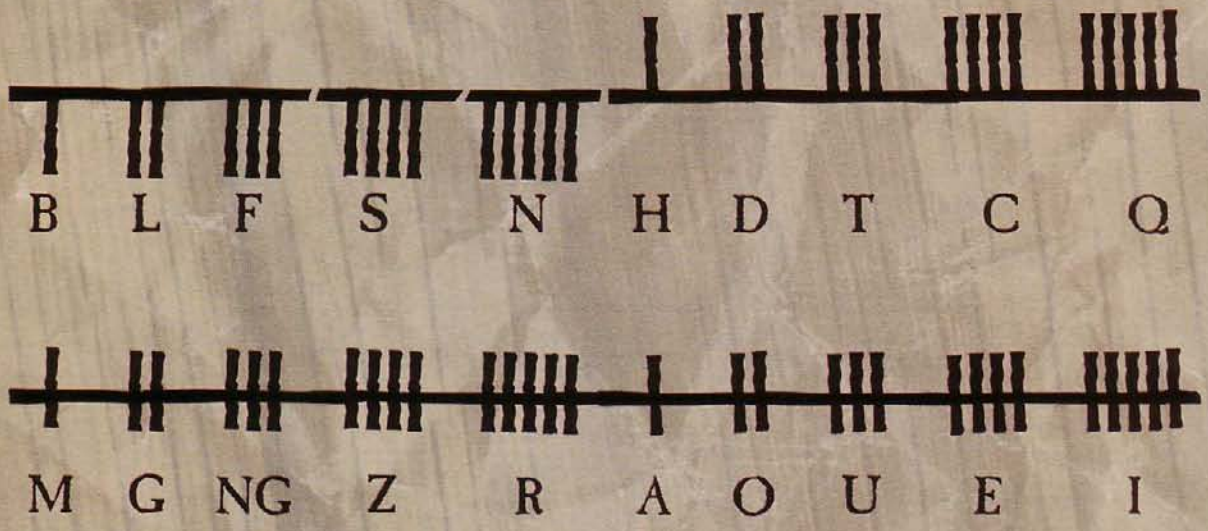
Julius Caesar's observation was based upon the druidic tenet that Truth was the Word, and the Word was sacred and not to be profaned. The druids maintained that all things were brought into being by giving them a name; such was the power of the Word. The Egyptians held similar beliefs. It was said that Ra, god of the sun, created himself from Nothingness by calling out his own name. In both Old and Modern Irish, the term for "name" is *ainm*. Not coincidentally, this is also the word for "soul." So to prevent the degradation of Truth, the spoken tongue of the Celts was never committed to paper or etched on stone. For writing purposes, the Celts made use of Greek, Latin, and Etruscan letters. Hence the utter absence of a unique written language amongst the continental Celtic tribes.

However, the druids of Ireland held no such reservations about writing.

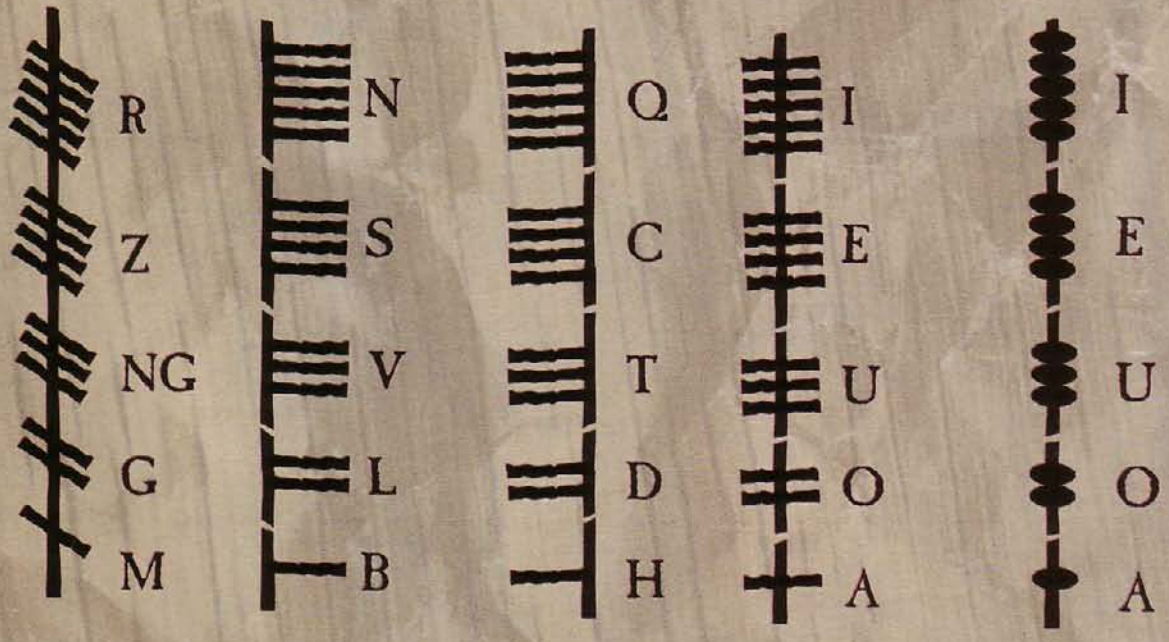
Letter	Ogham name	English name
B	Beth (BEH)	birch
L	Luis (LWEESH)	rowan
N	Nion (NEE-uhn)	ash
F	Fearn (FAIR-n)	alder
S	Saille (SAHL-yuh)	willow
H	Huath (Hoo-ah)	hawthorn
D	Duir (DOO-r)	oak
T	Tinne (CHIN-yuh)	holly
C	Coll (CULL)	hazel
Q	Quert (KWAIRT)	apple
M	Muin (MUHN)	grape vine
G	Gort (GORT)	ivy
Ng	Ngetal (NYEH-tl)	reed
St	Straif (STRAHF)	blackthorn
R	Ruis (RWEESH)	elder
A	Ailm (AHL-m)	silver fir
O	Onn (UHN)	furze
U	Ura (OO-rah)	heather
E	Eadha (EH-yuh)	poplar
I	Idho (EE-yoh)	yew

The Ogham Alphabet

Sometimes Oghams lie on the side. This is usually in manuscripts.



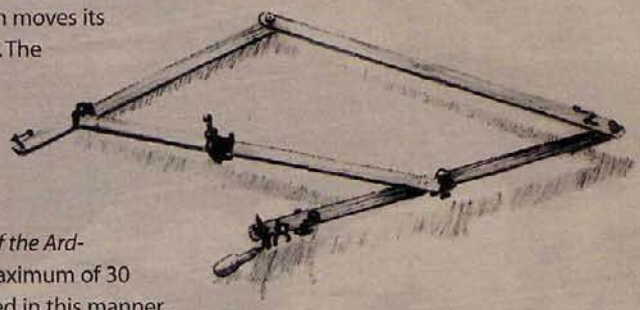
This is the vertical way of writing Oghams.



Sometimes vowels use dots rather than lines intersecting the vertical axis.

New D&D Magic Item:
Pantograph of the Ard-Ollamh

The first Ard-Ollamh, or Chief Poet, invented this item to assist him in the copying of sacred Ogham texts into tongues more widely understood, such as Common. The *pantograph* is a drawing instrument consisting of four lightweight wooden bars joined in the shape of a parallelogram and hinged so as to be extensible. By placing one arm of the *pantograph* on the original Ogham document and uttering the proper command phrase, the item moves its opposite arm to render a duplicate document. The *pantograph* pens the original text verbatim, save that the second text appears in Common (or any language of the DM's choice). Speaking the reverse of the command phrase enables the copying of Common texts into Ogham. The *pantograph of the Ard-Ollamh* inscribes one page per minute, to a maximum of 30 pages per day. Magic writings cannot be copied in this manner.



Caster Level: 3rd; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *comprehend languages; Market Price:* 1,000 gp; *Weight:* 2 lb.

The Irish sagas clearly reveal a distinctive druidic alphabet—Ogham—amongst the Celts of Ireland, with inscriptions dating back to the first and second centuries CE. The sundry Irish myths find heroes writing poetry in Ogham, warriors issuing Ogham challenges as inscribed on sacred sticks, and druids etching incantations on headstones and magic staves, always in cryptic Ogham. The *Book of Leinster*, 1150 CE, contends that Ogham sagas of the fifth and sixth centuries were inscribed on wands of hazel and aspen and gathered in great libraries known as *Tech Screpta*. Over the years, the wealth of the *Tech Screpta* was lost, some texts burned by Christian zealots, others simply eroded by time and the elements. At least 369 Ogham inscriptions have been found to date, most in Ireland, but also several scattered about Wales, Cornwall, and Scotland. Seeing this heavy geographic concentration, any reference to a druidic tongue refers specifically to the druids of Ireland, who made ready use of Ogham to record history, instruct their pupils in music and natural law, and pass along the wisdom of their forefathers.

According to a medieval text known as the *Book of Ballymote*, Ogham was created by Ogma Sun-Face, god of eloquence and learning, and thus somewhat of a patron for the druids, who were the intellectual caste in the Celtic social structure. Ogham has been called the "tree alphabet," due to the fact that each Irish letter is named after a certain tree. Each tree was believed to bear a host of magical properties and herbal ingredients.

When the *Book of Ballymote* was compiled by Maghnus Ó Duibhgeánnáin in the year 1390 CE, a treatise on Ogham was included, accompanied by an alphabet key. Scholars later used this text as their principal source for deciphering the pictograms they encountered on grave markers and standing stones on the British Isles. The letters of Ogham were formed by grouping together a series of dots and dashes, much like modern-day Morse code. Though consonants were always represented as dashes, vowels were often marked with smaller dots. Regardless of the writer's choice of dot or dash, each letter was marked along a vertical axis, and read from bottom to top.

In manuscript form, the Ogham letters would occasionally be written from left to right, as per traditional English. For example, the following Ogham script reads, "Fáilte Romhat," or "Welcome."

Ogham in Game Play

Aside from the transient thrill of being able to transcribe their spell lists into actual Ogham, D&D druids and *Shadowrun* druidic shamans can now make use of an individual archetype-based language, while gamemasters can use Ogham to further enlighten the setting of their campaign worlds with an element of historic fact. Ogham inscriptions can be distributed as player handouts. *Shadowrun* shamans might receive their traveling instructions in the ancient tongue, while mundanes might be forced to consult a druidic contact after finding an obelisk carved with quatrains of sacred Ogham poetics. Druids in the D&D game system automatically begin play with this tongue, as mentioned in the *Player's Handbook*. Druids in *Shadowrun* learn the tree tongue by spending language skill points, just as they would with any other language, although locating an appropriate instructor might prove difficult, given the insular nature of most druidic circles. Incidentally, finding a skillsoft formatted for Ogham in Seattle of 2061 CE might be an adventure unto itself!

Ogham doesn't have to exist only as a written language. Though it might be difficult to translate the symbols of Ogham into a purely vocal context, the tree tongue lends itself readily to sign language. By using four fingers of one hand to represent the various Ogham letters and the opposite palm as the vertical "baseline," druids can effectively communicate simple somatic messages. At the GM's discretion, players may be permitted to know at least two forms of Ogham, the written and the physically signed.

There are several ways to introduce Ogham into the ongoing campaign.

Divine gift: Just as Ogma delivered the secret of his language to his people, any one of the druidic totems of the *Shadowrun* universe could grant a favor to the high-ranking initiate of its order. In a D&D campaign, this favor could come from any suitable deity, such as Beory or Obad-Hai of the Greyhawk® setting, or Oghma of the Forgotten Realms®. It would then be the responsibility of the high priest to disseminate this tongue throughout the ranks of the brotherhood, while ensuring that it remained protected from the secular world. This would add several new possibilities for adventure within a druid-oriented campaign.

Discovery: A group of wandering druids, perhaps the player characters themselves, finish a long and arduous mission in the name of their order. As a reward, they uncover a ring of standing stones or a bundle of wooden rods on which the secret of lost Ogham has been

carved. In this instance, the players become the ultimate agents of Truth as they endeavor to spread the Word to their druidic brethren, while safeguarding it against those who would defile it.

Initiation: As part of his struggle to gain the higher ranks of shamanic ability, the *Shadowrun* initiate might be sent upon an Astral quest, during which he recovers the secrets of Ogham—if he survives! A druid from an D&D setting might undertake a *quest*, as per the spell, to accomplish a similar goal.

Invention: Under careful guidance by the GM, a character might be allowed to "create" the language of Ogham. That is, the PC spends game time and considerable nuyen or gold pieces to personally invent Ogham in much the same manner as a character researching a new spell. The GM might also require the player to possess certain scholarly and specialized skills, such as history or linguistics.

Deus ex machina: The easiest method of placing Ogham into the campaign is simply by gamemaster decree. One day the language is nonexistent, and with the coming sun, *voila*, Ogham appears. Though perhaps the least realistic of the gamemaster's options and certainly the most contrived, this is also the quickest way to insert Ogham into the campaign without introducing additional gaming material.

The ultimate breadth of Ogham in game play is left the purview of the gamemaster. Certainly all druidic spell formulae will be transcribed in Ogham, regardless of whether that transcription appears as a tangle of information in the Matrix or as graven pictograms on a staff of sandalwood. Historically, Ogham was chiefly used to record the deaths of kings, heroes, and other personages of note. Because of the natural limits of a "dot-and-dash" language, it is doubtful that Ogham was ever used to describe complex human emotions or other amorphous concepts such as dreams, aspirations, and spirituality. All of the extant Ogham inscriptions are merely chronicles of important dates, wars, migrations, and the lineage of kings. In a game setting, however, Ogham can be as vital and dynamic a tongue as the campaign requires.

Modern Ogham

Today's Ogham is a working and viable language, thanks to the efforts of linguistic scholars around the world. The International Standards Organization (ISO) is continuously working toward a modern, universally accepted Ogham. Hundreds of additions and corrections have been made throughout the years so that Ogham can accommodate modern demands. A new level of complexity has broadened the scope of the language to satisfy today's phonetic requirements. Computer keyboards now can be configured to an Ogham format as easily as French or Japanese! Several Ogham fonts currently are available to enhance word-processing programs, with many offered as free downloads from certain Internet sites. There might soon come a day when Ogham is even offered as a second language in universities across the globe. This would have come as no surprise at all to the ancient druids, who would have seen it as the natural progression of the wisdom of the Word.

Further Reading

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Chadwick, Nora K. *The Druids*. Cardiff: U Wales P, 1996.
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Nicholas, R. *The Book of Druidry*. London: Aquarian, 1990.

Finally, excellent Ogham Web sites can be found at the following addresses:
members.aol.com/irishdremr/oghamintro.htmlrabbitmoon.home.mindspring.com/asw/
uoguelph.ca/~bmyers/druid.html

A WAYFARERS GUIDE TO THE FORGOTTEN REALMS® BY ED GREENWOOD

If those who hide in Owlhold stood forth to whelm in a fighting force without battling among themselves, the map of realms around the Shining Sea might well change in a month. They'd be too few to hold a realm of size, but enough to topple any Kingdom they set their eyes upon. If they installed themselves on throne after throne and took care to please their new subjects, I can't see them being stopped this side of Waterdeep.

Ghuldribrand MrosterMage
Royal of Zindalankh
In coversation with Volo
Year of the Arch

Our look at the Owlhold in the Border Kingdoms continues this month, with a few surprises.

A GRIFFON ON THE ROAD

Owlen seeking to meet the outside world on their doorstep may go to The Four Stags at the north end of the Bowshot, but those desiring to meet each other or outsiders on "home ground" seek the other end of the same road.

There in a wooded hollow stands The Griffon Aflame (Good/Moderate), a rather more rustic establishment than the Stags, but possessing a gloomy charm of its own. Many mushrooms sprout unbidden in the wet, rotting wood of this cozy, rambling house that throws wings into the forest in all directions. The Griffon is home to many permanent residents and way-guests, all of whom appreciate the place's comfortable beds (many slung from the rafters on thick ropes), formidable beer and wine cellars, and generous, tasty stews. It's named for a long-ago aerial battle wherein a dragon-rider downed a flight of griffon-back foes. A good way to start an argument at the Griffon is to ask the identities of those warring parties, or why they clashed.

FALLENFALCON

Traveling the Bowshot north from the Griffon, the wayfarer encounters Fallenfalcon, a camping pavilion beside a drinkable stream and pool faced by four cottages inhabited by half-elven families. The two closest to the road house Nressa the Weaver and the family of Jlonkin the Bowyer, both of whom serve forth hot or cold bread and soups to travelers on short notice, and can manage substantial meals by prearrangement.

Plentiful herbs and edible berries grow wild for the picking along the trailside north of Fallenfalcon.

TROLLHEAD BRIDGE

The next site north along the road is Trollhead Bridge, a wide, rail-less span across a bog. A message-stone (rock in whose crevices written missives are left by prearrangement) at its south end is carved in the likeness of a long-nosed troll head as tall as a large warrior. Anyone who removes or alters a message not meant for them receives an arrow through a hand if any Owlen sees or hears of the deed.

At the Bridge is a sleeping-pavilion with a firepit and pump. Travelers are warned that dry firewood is rare in the vicinity, but stinging swamp insects are not.

HATHLOCK HOUSE

The farer north from the Bridge will climb out of bogs to arrive at Hathlock's Rest, a former foresters' settlement now abandoned except for Hathlock House (Fair/Moderate), a rustic way-inn that offers uninspired food and clean but spartan sleeping and stabling. Luxuries and amenities aren't to be had here, no matter how many coins a traveler offers; the House is primarily the common residence of seven hunters and fur-trappers, not a well-supplied inn.

THE WOLF BELT

Two days of hard travel through deep, wolf-roamed woods north of the Rest stands the Wolf Belt (Fair/Expensive), a tavern of sorts. It's a large, open campground with privies at one end and a serving-shack at the other—a rough wooden shed built over a keg cellar, wherein staff serve drinks across a counter to patrons standing on a covered porch. The drink is strong and rough rather than refined, famous, or imported from afar—but the supply is seemingly endless, and in winter the fare is usually supplemented by a hot mushroom-and-herb rabbit broth. The Belt is open at all hours, but at night or in severe weather, the porch shutters are fastened down to leave only a single serving-opening.

Apt to host more than its share of drunken brawls and contests, the Belt is policed by the brawniest of its servers, two man-mountain brothers known as Ueval and Ivver Ringam. The pair is bolstered by the hard- and accurately-thrown bottles of their spiderlike long-limbed, lanky female fellow server, Shassra "Darkeyes" Rurth (whom few know is the owner

of the place).

The twenty-odd staff of the Belt dwell under the serving-shack in cellars arranged in a series of defensible points, with the keg-cellars outermost, a firewood cellar next, then living quarters (with beast-screened airshafts to the surface, actually located halfway down the side of a wooded hill behind the Belt), and a pantry innermost.

Much of the drink sold at the Belt is brewed or distilled in the woods behind the serving-shack, and there are rumors that an altar to a dark god (tales vary) stands back there, too—and that the staff of the Belt worship this dark power. Such tales, it should be noted, do little to discourage clientele or consumption.

The truth is that two local trappers worship Shar at an old altar, and the staff of the Belt (who dwell together in what might be termed an "open marriage") avoid it.

SABROAR'S HOLD

Sabroar was a locally famous priest of Silvanus who consecrated many groves to the Green Father, but here established herb gardens for the use of his followers, who continued to tend them after his death. So many buyers came here, needing a place to stay overnight, that the two-story inn of Sabroar's Hold (Excellent/Moderate) was built. In turn, the inn's presence spurred artisans (weavers, glass-blowers, and sellers-of-seeds) to take rooms here from time to time to sell their wares, and then melt back into the forest until next they have enough to sell to make the trip. Priests of Silvanus police the inn against thefts, swindlers, and to settle trade disputes, acting as moneychangers and bankers (keeping the funds of the nervous hidden safe in exchange for trade-tokens) for all.

Chief among them are Erendin Speaker-for-Sabroar, and his assistants Snaruldar and Jessilleia, who use no surnames since taking service with the Oak Father. They heal only in emergencies, directing most ill and injured to Jester's Hollow, and don't run the inn.

The master of the Hold is the jovial, slender, agile prankster (and avid dancer) Imryn Roaringhorn. A distant relation to that noble Waterdhavian family, Roaringhorn directs a staff of almost twenty (notably a dozen stout, matronly women who know far more of the world than they let on, and are both good cooks and skilled "street fighters" who once wore armor for Tethyr), and tries to be a friend to all. He's sensitive and thoughtful enough to be regarded as such by most in the Hold.

The inn kitchens turn out wonderful breads, cakes, and pastries, and satisfying stews and roasts that are only garnished with forest fowl, and owe most of their hearty taste to forest vegetables and sauces seasoned by fare found in the woods around the Hold (mushrooms, mosses, roots, and berries). This would come as a surprise to many of the travelers who delight in the hearty "boar" and "stag" roasts that seldom have anything to do with either beast.

JESTER'S HOLLOW

This broad, wooded stream-valley is hung with lanterns and is often adrift with pleasing cooking-smokes. It holds the inn that bears its name and a dozen charming cottages; six are the clearly-signed homes of folk who welcome customers.

A rock-studded brook meanders through the Hollow. Laughing Lady Stream is named for a long-dead sorceress who once dwelt in the Hollow (the inn stands on the foundations of her tiny tower), and whose proper name, Jestra, became corrupted into "Jester" to give the Hollow its present name.

"Anyone who removes or alters a message not meant for them receives an arrow through a hand if any Owlen sees or hears of the deed."

Jestra Illowhand liked to preserve music to hear over and over in the privacy of her own tower without musicians. She devised a spell that captured short snatches of sound in rock crystals and gemstones; any human touch on a stone caused it to "play" the captured sounds.

Somewhere in the woods near the Hollow is the buried entrance to the cavern where Jestra stored the gems she'd thus treated, now a priceless collection of not just music, but of now-dead kings, wizards, bards, and sages speaking on everything from the whereabouts of buried treasure to philosophical musings on the purposes of life and ruling and wars. Its finder can literally name his price for most of the gems.

Next issue we'll have a good look around Jester's Hollow, and conclude our tour of Owlhold. Until then, as Elminster says, "Think about what ye're doing, will ye?"

Monkeyman

Chuck Lukacs

Medium-Size Magical Beast
Hit Dice: 3d10+3 (19 hp)
Initiative: +2
Speed: 40 ft., climb 30 ft.
AC: 14 (+2 natural, +2 Dex)
Attacks: 2 claws +6 melee
Damage: Claw 1d4+2
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Metal claws, pounce
Special Qualities: Darkvision, fast healing 1, illusory form, low-light vision
Saves: Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +2
Abilities: Str 14, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 13, Cha 7
Skills: Balance +6, Climb +10, Hide +6, Intimidate +0, Jump +12, Move Silently +6, Spot +2, Tumble +5
Feats: Weapon Focus (claw)

Climate/Terrain: Any temperate and warm land and forest
Organization: Solitary or Gang (2-5)
Challenge Rating: 2
Alignment: Usually chaotic neutral
Advancement: 4-6 HD (Medium-size), 7-9 HD (Large)

For one terrifying week in May, the people of New Delhi cowered in fear. Their city had been visited by a terrible spirit known to locals as the monkeyman, a short, metal-handed simian monster who crawled up walls and into open apartment windows, terrorizing the good people of India's capital. Within a week, monkeyman had claimed two lives—a pregnant woman who fell down a flight of stairs while fleeing from cries of "Monkeyman! Monkeyman!" and an adult male who jumped off his roof rather than face the menace of monkey unchained.

Naturally, we at *Polyhedron* decided to make a mockery of this real-world tragedy. Almost a month after the first appearance of the monkeyman, Delhi officials had declared the bizarre creature a case of mass hysteria. With a sigh of relief, the people of India returned to their lives. With a sigh or remorse, we alighted to our keyboards to ensure that the monkeyman lives on—in your DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® campaign.

Monkeymen resemble man-sized monkeys with strange metal hands. Their obscure motives seem to involve terrorizing city inhabitants by breaking into homes and causing havoc meant to entice their victims into self-destructive behavior. Such attacks frequently involve scratching and biting, but the monkeyman seldom fights to the death, usually fleeing at the first sign of danger.

The monkey often has humanlike facial features, and each individual tends to have its own style of facial hair (none, a thick beard, and so on). Monkeymen have not been known to speak, but probably have their own language and understand some Common. Their metal hands are fully flexible and can manipulate objects as the hands of an actual monkey.

A monkeyman is mischievous and apparently carries out its aggressive actions under the cover of darkness because it enjoys causing panic and mayhem. Most of its victims are struck once or twice before the creature retreats, often making much noise and knocking over loose items on its way out. If seriously threatened, a monkeyman is likely to run away.

COMBAT

Monkeymen like to attack from ambush or sneak into quiet homes at night to provoke and scare sleepers. When travelling in groups they prefer to attack opponents individually. If one monkeyman retreats, they all tend to retreat.

Illusory Form (Su): A monkeyman can clothe itself in an illusion, gaining the appearance of a stray cat of Tiny size. The illusion ends if the monkeyman attacks or dismisses the effect.

Metal Claws (Ex): A monkeyman's metal claws are considered +1 magical weapons for the purpose of bypassing damage reduction or striking incorporeal creatures. They do not gain an enhancement bonus to hit or damage. The claws do not retain these abilities if the monkeyman is killed.

Pounce (Ex): If a monkeyman leaps upon a foe during the first round of combat, it can make a full attack even if it has already taken a move action.

Skills: Monkeymen receive a +10 racial bonus to Jump checks.

MONKEYMAN SOCIETY

Little is known about monkeyman society because they have never been seen in any situation other than their random attacks upon city residents. Because no females have ever been seen and each monkeyman has a different appearance, it is possible that monkeymen mate with normal simians.

Death Comes Ripping

BY SIMON TAYLOR

Having examined birth and marriage in previous issues, it's time to pay a visit to the Grim Reaper himself: Death.

Though it's a sensitive topic in real life, most roleplaying sessions are full of death. In the archetypal dungeon crawl, both mighty-thewed heroes and doom-spewing wizards liberally deal out death. Even the death of player characters is relatively common. And yet, in real life, a death is a traumatic and deeply affecting moment. I've had the misfortune to suffer three family deaths in the last year, and the shock and pain associated with such a moment is not something to be treated lightly. Through this article, however, I hope to show how game masters can use that pain as the backbone of plots to enliven and enrich their roleplaying campaigns.

First of all, a word of advice: be VERY careful how you use the theme of death. Any players who've suffered the death of a close friend or family member may well not want to confront some of these issues. If I'm running a storyline involving these ideas, I always give my players a warning that we are about to move into territory with which they may be uncomfortable. I also give them hints about the areas we are going to touch upon, so they can decide whether or not they want to continue. I always have a contingency plan in mind and will use it if any players express reservations.

Assuming your players are willing to face the complicated issues surrounding death, you might find the following plot ideas useful.

RELATIVELY SPEAKING

Suddenly and without warning a character hears of the death of a close family member—a brother, sister, father, mother, child, grandparent or even an uncle or aunt who played a role in the upbringing of the character. Rather than to countless "monsters" who are little more than a faceless collection of stats, this time death has come to someone close.

Whilst seeming like background detail this theme can be used not only to bring out some magnificent roleplaying but also to act as the backdrop to a scenario of great beauty. By contrasting the dark, doom-laden theme with an uplifting triumph against the odds you can demonstrate that some of the trite platitudes that people spout at these times of grief often have a basis in fact. Life does go on, but at this time it might not feel like it. The dark atmosphere that surrounds the death of a loved one can be lifted by the player characters as they achieve something out of the ordinary.

Perhaps the departed had a life-long ambition to achieve some great aim. Perhaps the family desires a lasting monument to the relative. Whatever it is, it should be spiritually uplifting and powerfully affecting when the PCs finally manage to achieve the aim in memory of the departed relative. In a horror campaign, the event should provide a ray of light that permeates the gloom. In a heroic campaign, the event should solidify the rightness of the PCs' mission.

The real power in this scenario comes from the PCs themselves. By involving their family you allow them to get closer to their characters'

motivations. By then allowing them to achieve a great aim (against great odds, of course), held personally dear to someone close to the PCs, you provide them with an opportunity to feel the reflected pride much more strongly than might otherwise be possible. In the best of cases, the associated roleplaying might approach an art form.

ASHES TO ASHES

Funeral rites vary from one society to another. Whether it's the burning boat of the Norse or the mummification of ancient Egypt, one essential fact remains the same. The funeral is a way for those left behind to bid farewell to the departed and a sanctified method for allowing the dead to gracefully pass from this life. In a fantasy campaign, funeral rites could be much more complex.

Suppose you're running a classic fantasy campaign. Consider how the funeral rites for each society and race differ from the Judeo-Christian norm.

Perhaps elves, for example, bury their dead only after planting the body with an acorn, which later grows into a great oak that forms part of a forest city.

Perhaps dryads are born from the melding of the elven spirit with the new seedling. Dwarves, being ritualistic in the extreme, probably conduct week-long rites and rituals before placing the bodies of their slain into the center of their great smithing furnace.

Orcs may well eat the bodies of their dead. Not only do they view the corpse as a source of fresh meat, but perhaps they hold a deep-rooted belief in which they become one with the eaten comrade.

Think long and hard about details like this and your whole campaign will become infinitely richer. If you can build a scenario around the funeral preparations, your PCs will get a clearer view of the society they are dealing with. Don't forget that some of these rites will be reflected in daily life.

If elves believe that a tree somehow holds the spirit of an ancient ancestor, their awe and attitude toward the tree takes on a new and deeper significance. In a similar vein, the concept of Heaven and life after death will vary from race to race. Apply some thought to what each race believes and how those beliefs manifest in day-to-day life and your campaign will surely benefit.

Orcs may well eat the bodies of their dead. Not only do they view the corpse as a source of fresh meat, but perhaps they hold a deep-rooted belief in which they become one with the eaten comrade.

BEING OF SOUND MIND....

One of the classic starting points for *Call of Cthulhu* scenarios is the reading of the will of some poor Mythos-rent individual. The recipient of such a bequest seldom improves his lot! It's no coincidence that Agatha Christie used the disputed will so often in her stories, either. Countless great scenarios can be constructed from this idea kernel. Whilst a bit cliché, the opportunities for variations on a theme mean that the PCs never quite will know where you are going with this scenario. Let's consider the options.

The PCs could be hired to find a missing will. They could be hired to check the authenticity of a disputed will. They themselves could be the recipients of an object or a bequest that leads to a fresh set of challenges and adventures. Suppose the will has clauses attached to it that must be fulfilled before the inheritance can be received. Maybe the scenario is a pure murder mystery in which the reading of the will, in an old, scary house on a hill, of course, is disturbed by the murder of one of the guests. Yes, we're talking *Ten Little Indians* territory here. And yes, it has been spoofed repeatedly, but that doesn't mean it can't work as a fun and exciting scenario. I hope your brain is starting to tick already. The opportunities are vast and, whilst a little overdone in films and books, have been relatively unexplored in the realm of roleplaying games.

Next issue I hope to look at some related themes. We've had births, marriages, and deaths. What follows death but the afterlife? Spirits and ghosts and things that go bump in the night haunt the next *Bare Bones*. Until then, don't forget to check under the bed before you go to sleep!

I welcome feedback on any aspect of *Bare Bones* and am particularly keen to hear from anybody who uses any of the ideas presented here. You can contact me at simon@jester.il2.com.

Good gaming!

A Lion in the Ropes

The honeymoon is over. Maybe I've become jaded. Maybe the magic of the d20 license has worn off. Whichever the case, I have few good things to say about the latest offering from Troll Lord Games. At best it's an uninspiring jaunt into yet another campaign world set in the shadow of an ancient empire (yawn). At worst it is a sub-par d20 product worthy of only a brief glance as it sits on your local game store shelf, followed quickly by a sly grin before you move your eyes to something else.

Allow me to ruin the story for you. People are dying around the village of Capendu, a small out-of-the-way town in Troll Lord's World of Erde setting. The people of Capendu believe a charon fiend—a medusa-ish abomination that serves as a bogeyman for the adventure—is behind the deaths. The town's people have seen the shadow of the fiend stalking the riverside and nearby fields. There are right, there is a monster stalking the village, but it has nothing to do with what they think they spot in the shadows and by the river. Indeed, the "monster" here is the poorly conceived adventure itself. The unfortunate creature the townsfolk spotted was just an old circus lion, still sporting its binds, looking for a stray dog, cat, or goat to munch on. The real culprit of the killings can only be found if the DM keeps strictly to the railroad plot and tells the PCs what actions they take, something the read-aloud text does with infuriating frequency.

A Lion in the Ropes reads more like a bad Internet-published medieval murder mystery than a fantasy roleplaying adventure. Half of the plot is an annoying and purposefully placed red herring that the lucky and smart will ignore. The rest of the adventure is a hurry-up-and-finish conclusion, worse than the like of which you will see on that syndicated monstrosity, *The Beastmaster*. The only thing I liked about *A Lion in the Ropes* was how it presented its d20 information. Every bit of rules (game content covered under the Open Gaming License) is presented in easy to identify grayed-out boxes. Unfortunately, much like the guts of the adventure, there is very little in *Lion's* game mechanics that you will want to add to your game. Of the three new monsters, the charon fiend is the most interesting, but it never really shows up in play. And, as interesting as it is, I have a dirty feeling that it was a rip-off of the kamadan from the good ol' *Fiend Folio*. Of the other two, the "Unklar's breath" is a statistically challenged, misty killer that is presented as a magical beast but lacks a fly speed or even a base attack. The third creature, the orinsu, is a monster that wants to be a template and succeeds at being nothing worthy of comment. Oh, *Lion* also sports a 1st-level cleric spell that is about as exciting as the old first edition *color* cantrip. Yippie!

I do have a word of advice for DMs who brave running this adventure—take a close look at the Unklar's breath and fix it before you run your game. As written it's either a pointless time-waster or the makings of a death trap. Once fixed it could make a better villain than the true bad-guy of the adventure. On second thought, pick up one of Green Ronin's *Freeport* adventures, something from *Dungeon* magazine, or make up a quick plot five minutes before your game session instead—your players will thank you.—STEPHEN RADNEY-MACFARLAND

The Lion In the Ropes
A 24-page d20 adventure
By Stephen Chenault
Published by Troll Lord Games
$6.00 US

A d20 adventure set in the World of Erde, *Lion* pits adventurers against a bad spoon-fed plot and cutting-room floor quality monsters. Sometimes during the course of an adventure you can defeat a challenge by avoiding it entirely. The strategy works in real life, too, and should be applied when your DM pulls out this monstrosity.

Accessibility:	2
Art:	2
Design:	1
Value:	1

Relics & Rituals

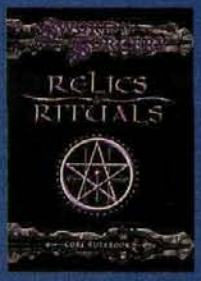
Sword and Sorcery's *Relics & Rituals* is like candy. When first you see it in the game shop window, you salivate. It just looks yummy—its black and silver design is what you want your character's spellbook to look like. At the cash register you feel your heart race in anticipation to taste your new buy. Flipping through the book provides a joy of magical sweetness: interesting-looking prestige classes, spells upon spells, upon spells, upon true rituals (spells featuring multiple casters) upon magic items. After all, what real fantasy roleplaying goober isn't excited by more potentially thrilling arcana for their character or campaign? Finally when you get to gobble it up, you're left satisfied...for a while, at least. But, like candy, *Relics & Rituals* may just ruin your dinner...er, I mean, game.

Relics & Rituals is a fantastic "idea" book. The talented folks at Sword & Sorcery definitely can pump out good ideas. I was jumping up and down with excitement when I read the book's first prestige class—the blood witch, a sickening spellcaster who enhances spells by stealing the life force of her victims by way of blood sacrifice. I enjoyed pondering the weird fun of *Dolomar's limited liquifaction*, a spell that allows the caster to take a slick liquid shape—a wet and wild variant *gaseous form*, as it were. I giggled aloud at the evil fun I could have while setting loose a *lycanthrope infestation* upon the home region of the unwitting PCs in my home campaign. *Lycanthrope infestation* is a wizard's true ritual that does exactly what its name implies. Oh, and tattoo magic, the art of inscribing skin art with magical power, is just darn cool. *Relics & Rituals*, once opened, will give any DM or player nasty ideas to enhance their campaigns, and is worth buying just for that.

The devil is in the details, though, and *Relics & Rituals* is a virtual hell of details. The most obvious, well-touted, and infuriating problem is that none of the magic items have costs, but there are others. If you ask me, all the prestige classes are a tad too powerful, and there are some spells that will make you shake your head and vow "not in my campaign." My personal favorite of that class is *bottomless pit*, which in the hands of a crafty sorcerer or wizard can be a real game-wrecker.

Other new rules are a tad puzzling. Take the rules for casting rituals, spells that require multiple spellcasters to complete. Ritual Casting is a skill that applies a metamagic effect to a spell by way of increasing its casting time (i.e. ritualizing the spell). The skill has a huge potential to both slow down play and give spellcaster PCs increased power with very little actual drawback. Game time is a relative commodity in almost any roleplaying game, and as such using it as a balancing factor for some powerful boon is tricky at best. While most of the True Rituals are fun, others like *marriage* or *indoctrination* are little more than roleplaying garnish. A few, like *rite of summer* (a little druid ditty in which a group of five 2nd-level druids can grant a +2 enhancement bonus to Constitution for the entire summer) are too powerful and too difficult to track effectively.

Don't let my naysaying about some of the details fool you, though. I love this book. And I thought the *Creature Collection*, Sword & Sorcery's first delve into the d20 license, best served as a shelf adornment. Though some of the rules in *Relics & Rituals* are misfires, other ideas within will change the way you think about magic in your campaign. I predict this book will have a stable place in the d20 fan canon. I simply advise DMs to be choosy regarding which sections of the book they allow in their campaign "as is."—STEPHEN RADNEY-MACFARLAND



Reilcs & Rituals
A 224-page d20 collection of all things magical
By various authors
Published by Sword & Sorcery Studios
$24.95 US

Sword and Sorcery's second "Core Rules" hardback bursts at the seams with great ideas and interesting arcana for any campaign. Beware, though. Some of it is a tad powerful, and munchkins and spell weasels will have a field day talking unwitting DMs into rashly including some of the book's more egregious offerings.

Accessibility:	5
Art:	5
Design:	4
Value:	5

Death in Freeport

Writing a successful generic d20 product is like walking a tightrope. It has to be focused enough so that you don't slip and fall into the great gaping maw of a "kewl" idea gone sucky, and it must be fluid enough to handle the surreal bumps and jiggles of the tastes of the general fantasy roleplaying fan. In short, it has to present enough fun to be contagious to as many imaginations as possible while giving enough slack to allow it to fit into almost everyone's vision of the ideal fantasy game setting.

Almost no d20 adventure, thus far, has been able to do that as well as *Death in Freeport*.

Death in Freeport opens with a nice brief description and history of the city of Freeport, a pirate hideout turned prosperous maritime city-state. The history is so vague that it gives game masters room to place Freeport anywhere a city on an island chain would fit while allowing him or her the breathing room to add as much or as little detail as desired. After all, only the most esoteric of campaign settings lack pirate isles. Within five pages designer Chris Pramas presents a wonderful backdrop for adventure painted with refreshingly broad strokes.

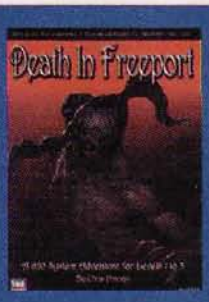
Next comes the adventure. The action begins with a mystery, as a cleric of the God of Knowledge, Brother Egil, notices the capable Player Characters and hires them to find a fellow priest named Lucius, who has recently disappeared. Egil is worried not only about his friend's disappearance, but also his mental state—Lucius was known as a troubled fellow with a dark history of insanity. As the PCs attempt to discover Lucius's fate their twisting path leads to the home of the disappeared scribe, the gangplank of an orcish pirate ship, and the Temple to the God of Knowledge. Each encounter allows for good roleplaying tomfoolery, eventually progressing to an alleyway ambush. From information gleaned from roleplaying and defeating bad guys, the PCs are led to a dungeon crawl where Lucius's fate is revealed in all of its slithering horror.

Freeport defined the now cliché d20 artistic maneuver of using second-run Brom art for its cover, a fitting image of a haunting skeleton from the adventure's dungeon. The text is clear, focused, and helps the DM at every turn. The maps and player handouts are also clear and very expressive. The interior illustrations are better than those in most d20 products, but are the least thrilling part of the total package.

Death in Freeport does have its problems. The Encounter Levels are deceptively low, but the adventure was written using playtest versions of the new D&D® rules, so some wonkiness was bound to creep in. If you run *Freeport*, adjust the combats where needed, usually adjusting down. Those DMs looking for a strong vision of game world styling will be disappointed. Many of the names are pulpy or overly familiar, and almost every bit of world-building is presented in the most general way possible. Sure, I identified that same trait as a strength above, but at the same time *Freeport* can seem hollow, if not downright shallow, in its presentation of a fantasy society. Like I said, d20 adventure writing is a tightrope walk.

Still, these flaws are minor considering some of the ruinous d20 products creeping out of some folks' basements these days.

In final analysis: *Freeport*, I like the cut of your jib.—STEPHEN RADNEY-MACFARLAND



Death in Freeport
A 32-page d20 System Adventure
By Chris Pramas
Published by Green Ronin Publishing
$7.99 US

Mix press gangs, insane priests, orc buccaneers, strange slithery things under a pirate hideout and high adventure, and you have Death in Freeport. Freeport is a d20 classic that deserves a look by all you salty dogs who keep passing it on the store shelves.

Accessibility:	5
Art:	4
Design:	4
Value:	5

Vodacce

AEG's *7th Sea* roleplaying game blends the atmosphere of 17th Century Earth with the trappings of traditional fantasy to create a setting bristling with the spirit of a swashbuckling epic. *Vodacce* is the sixth in a series of sourcebooks surveying the nations of Theah, AEG's imaginary version of a Europe that might have been.

Vodacce is Theah's take on Italy, and it's considerably darker in many ways than its neighboring nations. The basis of its cynical tone is The Great Game, a fictionalized version of the politics outlined in Machiavelli's *The Prince*. The Great Game is a cutthroat web of intrigue that infuses every aspect of life in the nation. From prince to pauper, everyone seems to be playing an angle. Those who refuse to play, or play poorly, end up as pawns for others' agendas or simply dead bodies floating in the water.

The book provides a rich history and culture of the land and its people that remains open enough for GMs to add their own stamp. *Vodacce* is divided into four different sections.

Chapter One, "Vodacce," concerns itself with the history and culture of the land. It provides extensive coverage of all seven controlling princes, with brief treatments given to two deceased bloodlines. The atlas material is limited to the locations noted in the *7th Sea GM's Guide*.

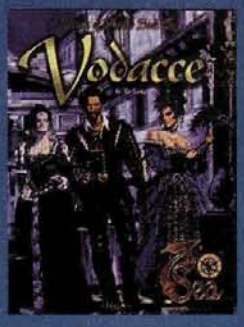
Information on these places is sparse but still manages to provide plenty of color and atmosphere for GMs. The real treat of this section is the historical account the ancient Numan Empire (Theah's Rome). This information is incredibly relevant to the campaign setting, as the empire plays a prominent role in much of the setting's current timeline. Attention is also given to the Church in Vodacce and its relationship to its bastions in neighboring Castille (Spain).

Chapter Two, "Hero," details the major NPCs at work in Vodacce. These are player-safe descriptions, as GM notes on secrets and agendas are reserved for the last section. Most of the individual Princes are covered here, as are some of their wives.

Chapter Three, "Drama," covers new game mechanics for players and GMs alike. The Destiny Spread, a background generator modeled after the sorcerous powers of Vodacce women (Fate Witches) is particularly noteworthy. Unlike previous variations in the *Nations* series, the Vodacce Destiny Spread can lead to future repercussions in the strands of fate that may present interesting possibilities for *7th Sea* campaigns. Three new swordsman schools are presented herein, including one unique to the Villanova family, one of the setting's premier villains. Another of note is the Bernoulli School, which is influenced by the similar styles in the Crescent Empire and utilizes the scimitar. Further expansion on the powers of the nation's Fate Witches includes a more detailed explanation of how Sorte works, as well as providing new powers for Fate Witches to practice. A final delight is a list of poisons popular in Vodacce, with detailed game effects.

The final chapter, "Cunning," is split between secret GM information and suggestions for roleplaying Vodacce characters. A solid treatment is given to the concept of Vodacce honor (which is very different from the concept in other nations) and Scarovese's Great Game. These two treatments are perhaps the most important pages in the text, as they define cultural aspects upon which nearly every aspect of Vodacce life hinges.

Vodacce represents long-time *Legend of the Five Rings* designer Ree Soesbee's first work in the *7th Sea* line. Soesbee puts an interesting stamp on the setting, playing up the fantasy aspects of the Fate Witches and the spider motif of Vodacce as a whole, giving the work a much more fantastical feel than other books in the *Nations of Theah* line.—TOM HARRISON



Vodacce (Nations of Theah: Book Six)
A 128-page 7th Sea sourcebook
By Ree Soesbee
Published by Alderac Entertainment Group
$19.95 US

Accessibility	4
Art	3
Design	3
Value	4

Dungeons & Daguerreotype

BY ED GIBSON

This column marks the three-year anniversary of *Web Wanderings* and its predecessor, *Internet 101*. I hope I have been able to contribute something you found useful in that time. I'd like to see more Web site suggestions from readers, especially now that *Polyhedron* serves the worldwide RPGA membership.

We'll begin with http://www.rochebaron.org/gb/accueila.htm, a site submitted by member Nick Isaac. It contains information on the historical Rochebaron castle, in France. A variety of pictures are provided and the floor plan of the castle is mapped to pictures of the various components. A slide show takes you through the old towers and other parts of the castle. The site offers a ready-made location for adventure—just add background, foes, and treasure. A links page provides gateways to a number of other castle sites. I particularly liked the castle of Cherveux. It offered excellent pictures and has a bed and breakfast in which you can room in the old dungeon. Visit http://perso.wanadoo.fr/chateau.de.cherveux for further information.

Of course, not everyone wants to be in the dungeon. For an idea of what it might be like in a modern-era dungeon, visit http://www.crime.com/info/jail-cam.html for live Web cam views of the Maricopa County Arizona jail. You may select from four different cameras to get an idea of what the normal procedures are in a jail (without experiencing it first hand). A map of the jail is also provided. You are cautioned that people being jailed are rarely in a good mood, and violence and other undesirable behavior may occur; please keep this in mind before checking out the site.

The United States government is remarkably open to putting military installations on the Internet. This month's stop is White Sands Missile Range, http://www.wsmr.army.mil/. If you visit the public affairs page, you can view a high-level map of the range and other background information. If you visit the testing page and select test capabilities, you receive a color-coded table of what testing is conducted and by which organization. Conspiracy buffs will note the NRO (National Reconnaissance Organization) on the list.

Google.com has become my search engine of choice. It manages to screen out most of the annoying porn sites and provides quality site matches. You can indicate that you're feeling lucky and it will automatically take you to the first matching page. Google also offers the option of searching by "Web directory," which is similar to Yahoo's presentation. If you're looking for a sample deed to add life to your roleplaying experience, just visit Google and enter "sample deed." It will provide a number of matches which can be captured for your use. Of course, these documents are for roleplaying purposes only, and you should consult an attorney if you need legal documents prepared in real life.

Here's a great site I ran across while checking out deeds on Google: http://www.city-gallery.com/. The site provides information on how to estimate the age of your old family photographs. It provides examples and detailed information about technique, dates of use, and appearance of four methods used before modern photography was developed, ambrotype (which replaced daguerrotype), carte de visite, cabinet card, and tintype.

This can be of great value to anyone who wants to present an accurate historical view, especially for the RPGA's LIVING DEATH™ campaign, *Call of Cthulhu*, or *Deadlands*. The Web site also offers a photo album. Readers submit old pictures in hopes that viewers can provide additional information on subjects, uniforms, etc. The pictures are stored as .jpg files and easily can be saved to your system and printed out for use as props. I can't be sure all the pictures will be present when you read this, but the site offers a variety of pictures ranging from the early 1800's to around 1940, including turn of the century photos of India. If you only visit one site I recommend this year, make it this one. Unless you are purely into fantasy worlds, you will find something you can use to add color to your campaign.

This column is written to give you ideas to use in your roleplaying campaigns and get your creative juices flowing. If you run across an interesting site or have an Internet-related idea that could benefit other RPGA members, send it along to polyhedron@wizards.com.

And So It Begins

April and May mark the traditional beginning of the Summer convention season—though things don't really heat up until early June. While the RPGA® Network staff and members around the world gear up for the madness of *Origins* and GEN CON®, let's take a look at the shows that kicked off the season.

BATTLEMASTERS
LOUGHBOROUGH, ENGLAND
APRIL 21-22, 2001

With the UK having been systematically drowned over the last few months, it came as a complete shock to attend an event in full sunshine. For two days, we closeted ourselves away, running games while the sun beat down. As we left the event, so the heavens opened and once again things returned to normality. The entire affair reminded me of the last couple of GEN CON UKs at Loughborough, where temperatures topped 90 degrees with NO air conditioning... but that's another story.

Battlemasters is a two-day event run by the independent gaming society Eurolog at Loughborough University, Loughborough, England (home of GEN CON UK from 1996—1999). The convention is renowned for the annual UK National *Call of Cthulhu* finals. In recent times, the RPGA® Network has been asked to offer games set in LIVING™ environments. Needless to say, this is something we are happy to provide.

Over the two days, players happily tried and died, fighting all types of critters in six tables of LIVING GREYHAWK™ and four tables of LIVING CITY™. Quite a few of you never left us and would have happily gamed for 24 hours had the venue not called a stop at 1:00 a.m. on Saturday morning.

Other games on offer for the 200-or-so players were various home-grown games and systems, *Chivalry and Sorcery*, the aforementioned *Call of Cthulhu* nationals, *Delta Green*, a selection of networked computer games, super hero games, *Star Fleet Battles*, and much, much more. Coupled with the games, a few traders made it a good little con with a very relaxed social feel. The beer prices were real cheap, too. Or so I was told. Honest.

I have to say that the guys from Eurolog provide excellent games and support every year to GEN CON UK, and this year's *Battlemasters* was an extension of that excellence. Thanks to all for a great weekend and most of all to Les "I've died again," whose comments at some of the LIVING tables had me amused for most of the weekend.—IAN RICHARDS

UK STUDENT NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS
LEICESTER, ENGLAND
APRIL 20-22, 2001

Every year, the Universities in the UK battle it out to determine the top gaming team. This involves team members (teams ranged from 2–25+ members) playing in just about every round of the weekend. In every six-hour slot there are multiple games systems being run, much like any large convention. This also included fantasy war games such as *Warhammer* and *Warhammer 40K*. The marks from each table goes through to your overall ranking in that section (e.g. D&D), where individual prizes are handed out, and the ranking affects your overall team (university) score. The top-scoring University (and not surprisingly, usually one of the largest teams) wins and apart from being crowned top University gets the dubious honour of running the following year's championships.

The RPGA first became involved last year, when we descended upon sunny Glasgow, Scotland. This year saw us moving several hundred miles south and into England at the De Montford University, Leicester. The emphasis of this event, as with the previous year, is not always on winning but more often than not on having fun. This aging gamer just about remembers what it was like socially at College and University and believe me, nothing but the clothing styles and haircuts have changed. The epitome of this is the headache-inducing Saturday night party. After a hard day of gaming what you need is music, cheap beer and great friends to party all night with. But wait. They then did it all again on the Sunday! How? Search me, but I seem to remember doing such myself in my younger days, though those memories tend to be a bit blurred.

The event saw us running six six-hour D&D and *Call of Cthulhu* games for six to eight players on both days. Needless to say, games got off late on Sunday as the headaches took their tolls, but everyone seemed to have recovered by the end of the sessions.

This is the grass root of gaming. A lot of us remember getting involved with the hobby at a slightly younger age, but while at College and University we really developed an appetite to roleplay and found no end of spaces in our tutorials to sneak off and play. It is therefore important that we are seen to be encouraging and supporting the growth of the hobby

at this level. The RPGA has basically established itself as the market leader in offering a support structure and gaming environment to the hobby overall, and I'm proud to say this will continue.

So who won? Bangor University, Wales. So it's off to a third country in three years for next year's championships. Bangor be warned. You have your work cut out to beat the last two competitions. To those thinking of attending, ensure you have NO early lectures on the following Monday morning.—IAN RICHARDS

CON2001
RENO, NEVADA, USA
MAY24-28, 2001

Early this year, *Con2001*, a brand-new convention based in Reno, contacted HQ about running a special game, for which they promised to foot a considerable bill. Thus was born *Queen of the Merchants*, a multi-scenario two-day LIVING CITY event. The plot revolved around a threat to the status and popularity of Lady Lauren DeVillars, the "matriarch" of Ravens Bluff (see *Pillars of Ravens Bluff*, in this very issue, for more information on this important NPC). Since most of the scenarios in the game are scheduled for release in 2002, I won't spoil the rest of the plot.

We planned big.

We didn't quite pull it off. The LIVING CITY magic item creation rules debuted at the show, and were well received. Several of us were very tired when it was over. The event was successful, but on a smaller scale than planned, and we learned more about running a large multi-scenario game of this kind.

Con2001 was a science fiction and fantasy convention with a smaller gaming focus. Held in the convention space of the Reno Hilton, it suffered some from lack of visibility and from the distractions of the casino. The convention boasted several special guests, games, an exhibit hall, and several fun events that seemed to go off very well. However, turnout was less than expected, possibly because of the aforementioned lack of visibility.

Between 60 and 70 RPGA members attended, many from out of town. In addition to *Queen of the Merchants*, the RPGA sponsored several other games at the show. Though the local RPGA club, R.A.G.E., was not officially connected with the convention, several of the club's members were instrumental in running the RPGA events. Members from Washington state and Northern California judged many of the games, as well, and we are indebted to them for the ensuring that everyone had a game to play.

Though the convention overall was not a success and the *Queen of the Merchants* game did not meet our lofty ambitions, RPGA members had fun playing games and meeting with old friends. To a member of the RPGA HQ staff, that's the essence of success.—ROBERT WIESE

BEN CON
DENVER, COLORADO, USA
JUNE 7-10, 2001

Maybe size really does matter. When it comes to conventions, though, it's neither better nor worse to be larger or smaller—it's just different. Large conventions are all hustle and bustle, with so many things to see and do and choose between. There are lots of new faces and games, and the whole weekend leaves you breathless and exhausted. Small conventions, on the other hand, are more comfortable than exciting. As important as the gaming itself is the opportunity for friends, near and distant, to meet and catch up over a cold beer or soda, or to "talk shop" about the RPGA and the games, or to spend time just kibitzing about rules. I come home from large conventions exhausted, and from small conventions refreshed.

Last week, I returned positively reinvigorated from Denver, Colorado's *Ben Con*. As the RPGA HQ staff wraps up its weekly meetings, we ritually remind ourselves that we're here "for the members." Since returning from *Ben Con*, "the members" for me bear the faces of Cheryl and Dan Llewelyn, Robin Hartwig, Dale Friesen, Michelle Rooney, Ken Ritchart, Tim Creese, Lisa Gordon, Don Bingle, Dane Fuller, and Tom and Lynn Prusa, to name just a few. I come home from shows like GEN CON barely able to remember my own name, but I come home from shows like *Ben Con* with my head packed with names and faces I won't forget. Size really does matter.

Ben Con is short for "Benefit Convention," which is the convenient excuse these good folks use to host a four-day weekend of gaming and socializing. They're a 501(C) organization, so all of their events and activities raise money for charity, including all the games, several auctions, a masquerade ball, a pretty Certified Massage Therapist who rubs backs for benefit bucks, and the chance to dine with convention guests. (I never ate so well, or so much, at a show!) By Sunday evening, more than 500 guests had put up over $10,000 to support the *Children's Diabetes Foundation* and *Denver Works* (a project that facilitates employment for people with special needs). Gamers who combine fun with giving—that's a group of people I want to hang around with more often.

I wasn't the only guest of honor on the list, either. Aldo Ghiozzi, proprietor of Wingnut Games, was on hand to showcase his hilarious game, *Battle Cattle*, in which vicious and malevolent sheep must rightfully be blown to smithereens by the PC (and I definitely *don't* mean "politically correct") cattle, armed with cattle-pults, s'cud missiles, udder turrets, steak knives, and other weapons of extreme-prejudicial destruction. Monte Michael Moore also attended, bringing along a nice selection of his beautiful fantasy art.

The LIVING GREYHAWK campaign seemed to be the favorite RPG activity at *Ben Con* this year, but there were plenty of games to choose from, all around. Furthermore, as conventions go, it's pretty cheap to make *Ben Con*: I paid $160 for a roundtrip ticket from Seattle, and $40 per night for a private room. Other than a small sum for administrative costs, everything goes to the beneficiaries, so most gamers bring a little extra cash for spreading their blessings. If you're interested, check out www.bengames.org for information on the 2002 con.—DAVID WISE